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Darren Bader is from Connecticut but has been in New York for half of his life. He fell in love with art history/art/poetics around that halfway point. Since then, he's always liked asking himself – perhaps a bit compulsively – what art is. His best piece of advice: Keep the faith, but don't die for it just yet – unless you really want to.

François Berthoud spent his early years in a mountainous area of Switzerland. He makes images and illustrations mostly for fashion magazines and brands.

Giusi Ferrè was born, raised and still lives in Milano. While at primary school, she found an old comic book, *Mickey Mouse, the Journalist*. She realised that's what she wanted to be – a journalist, not Mickey Mouse. She writes for the *Corriere della Sera* about what is new and upcoming in fashion. And she loves it.

Alex Fury lives in London but is originally from the north. He looks at dresses all day and then writes nasty things about them. On his CV that translates to fashion editor of *The Independent* newspaper. His best piece of advice: Live beyond your means. It's always good to die in debt.

Michel Gaubert is from Paris. His parents are too, so he's a real Parisian. He is a sound designer. His best piece of advice: Try it once.

Hung Huang is from Beijing. She edits, writes and hopes to direct a video soon. She doesn't have a piece of advice but rather a question: Could a fashion guru please design a fashionable mask for Beijing? She's tired of the ugly 3M ones.

Susie Lau is from London by way of Hong Kong. She's an interloper. Her best piece of advice comes courtesy of her mum: Don't wear socks to bed. You'll grow fat and have nightmares.

Robert Polidori is from Montréal – but really from many places. He's lived in eight cities and has travelled to over 35 countries in 63 years. He practices photography as a knowledge acquisition methodology. His best piece of advice: Do what you think or feel you have to do. One thing leads to another. But at one time or another, it comes to an end.

Loïc Prigent is from France. He creates TV fun. His lengthy advice: Never pull a duck face. Do not over-filter. Don't listen to people who say don't wear black and navy together. Be nice, even in the snobbiest places. Do not have a ringtone. Don't call, just text – unless of course it's your mother.

Olivier Rizzo is from Tongeren, in Limburg, Belgium. Built on Roman ruins, it is on the border with the French-speaking part of Belgium, ten minutes from the Dutch border and 20 from the German. Olivier is a stylist and consultant. His best piece of advice: Be obsessive.

Matthew Stone was born in London but moved to the countryside near Bath when he was three. He and his family lived in a cottage with no electricity and he had a barn owl as a pet. He is an artist, photographer and musician. His best piece of advice: Listen very carefully to the advice you give others.

Juergen Teller is from Erlangen, Germany. He is a photographer. His best piece of advice: Take care of your back.

Willy Vanderperre is from Menen, West Flanders, Belgium – a typical border town. He tries to visually express himself. His best piece of advice: Continue living your youth, avoid the mid-life crisis.

Masthead

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Contributing Writers
Alexander Fury, Giusi Ferrè, Hung Huang, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Susie Lau, Loïc Prigent, Michel Gaubert.

Contributing Creatives
Darren Bader, François Berthoud, Olivier Rizzo, Panos Yiapanis.

Contributing Photographers
Robert Polidori, Matthew Stone, Juergen Teller, Willy Vanderperre.

Special Thanks to:
Benjamin Bastide, Adrien Blanchat, Thomas Bonnouvrier, Yves Carcelle, Francesca Colussi, Xerxes Cook, Lindsay Cooper, Floriane Desperier, Daniela Faccioli, Paola Faccioli, Noor Fares, Julia Hackel, Cale Harrison, Jamie Horridge, Gabriela Moussaieff, Sven Kauffman, Jordan Kelly, Peter Keyser, Alexandre Meerson, Jean-Michel Massey, Thu Nguyen, Amber Olsen, Matteo Osso, Jean Pigozzi, Élise de Rudder, Georg Ruffles, Marie-Amélie Sauvé, Jenny Slattery, Jerry Stafford, Anthony Turner, Lorraine Two, David White, Anya Yiapanis.

Publisher
Tartan Publishing Ltd

System
Tartan Publishing Ltd, 29-31 Brewery Road,
London, N7 9QH, United Kingdom, +44 (0)20 7619 6617.

For subscriptions please visit
www.system-magazine.com

Distribution by COMAG. Tavistock Works, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, UB7 7QX, +44 (0)18 9543 3811.

Colour reproduction by LBH Labs.
Printed and bound by Grafica Nappa Srl
in Aversa, Italy.

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ISSN NO: 2052-0808

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'He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.'

So Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw disparagingly declared in his 1903 play, *Man and Superman*.

It's a shame he never got to read the conversation our athletic cover star Juergen Teller recently had with curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. While Hans Ulrich explains how he's convinced Google to sponsor an entire generation of bright young artists, Juergen reveals why teaching Bavarian photography students on a hangover (him and them) is the perfect antidote to shooting luxury advertising campaigns. Mr Teller's first lesson: Love life.

It makes for a heady and inspiring read.

So much so that teaching subsequently became a central theme in this issue of *System*. From Karl Lagerfeld sharing his encyclopædic knowledge of pre-First World War caricaturists to Warhol's right-hand man Bob Colacello's lively history lesson in what made the 1980s America's last great decade (clue: Ronald Reagan and after-hours dive bars). Even Donatella Versace dusts off her black cape and mortar board to reveal how she taught Madonna and Lady Gaga everything they know.

And if that isn't convincing enough, simply peruse Juergen's wonderfully giddy pictures of his students *in situ*. So deliciously upbeat, so infectiously fun, they represent the best university prospectus you're never likely to see. We're confident Mr Shaw would have disapproved.

‘By now, people know what they’re getting into with me.’

Juergen Teller goes back to school.

By Hans Ulrich Obrist
Photographs by Juergen Teller

Much is made of Juergen Teller's seemingly unique place in the world of photography. Blurring the lines between commercial and fine-art pictures, his ad campaigns hang in museums while his eye-popping self-portraits end up promoting luxury brands. Juergen's is a topsy-turvy world, one that happily eschews the conventional wisdom that Art shouldn't be dirtied by commerce and that commercial assignments only function with 'commercial' imagery.

At the beginning of the year, Juergen excitedly shared some news with us. He had branched out into an entirely new photographic activity: teaching at Nuremberg's Academy of Fine Arts. He'd already got his students shooting a number of Teller-esque assignments – a nude, food, your street, your parents, animals. He was genuinely thrilled by what they'd come back with.

And then came the idea.

If his presence as a teacher could have any real influence, the students' work would need to get fast-tracked into a 'real' environment. One that might introduce these images to the people who decide what goes in magazines, fills gallery walls, sells luxury clothing.

The students' photographs, Juergen suggested, should be published in *System*.

Of course they should. Primarily, because much of the work shows promise and is worth sharing. But also, by accepting Juergen's request, we're furthering his own blurring of what should and shouldn't be done in fashion photography. We've been willfully kidnapped. It's a kind of photographic Stockholm syndrome.

What's more, the following conversation between Juergen and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist convincingly puts forward the case for teaching – or at least sharing one's experiences. And then there's the wonderfully giddy portfolio of Juergen's own pictures of the students and their school. So deliciously upbeat, so infectiously fun, they represent the best university prospectus you're never likely to see.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Let me just turn on the second recorder. I always bring two just in case one doesn't work.
Juergen Teller: That's how I work too. I always have two cameras.

I recently interviewed Jeanne Moreau. She came to the interview with full make up and with her hair done and expected me to bring a photographer along. There had been some sort of misunderstanding. After the interview she asked, '*Où est le photographe, où est le photographe*?' I couldn't let it end like that, so I told her, 'Madame Moreau, I always do the interview *and* the photograph' – even though I've never done portrait photography in my life. Then she directed me through the shoot. 'Higher, higher, left, right.' I thought about that this morning, because it was about teaching and transmission of knowledge. Are there any rules for doing portrait photography?
No, actually not. The only thing that's important, is that you capture the person as good as you think is possible, that you get into their psyche – who the person is themselves. Sometimes it takes a long time, and sometimes it is rather quick. You have to quickly understand their gestures – how they drink coffee or how they hold their hands. You have to recognise this right away. I also think that because I'm so open, it makes people feel more relaxed. Then of course it is also about the way I actually take pictures: I don't use a camera stand, so the subjects aren't frozen on the spot. And they become more at ease and more comfortable the more pictures I take.

When you took my portrait, I noticed that you used a flash and were clicking what seemed like a hundred times. Then there came a moment when I just surrendered.
Exactly.

So that is an element of your technique: taking as many pictures as possible.

'Taking as many pictures as possible would be too simplistic – it's a bit more complex than that! By taking many, I seem to relax the subject and myself.'

And with two cameras.
Taking as many pictures as possible would be too simplistic – it's a bit more complex than that! Sometimes I only take a few. But by taking many, I seem to relax the subject and myself.

Do you actually use both cameras at the same time?
No, not at the same time. It is one time like this and then the other time like that [*Juergen shows the way he holds the cameras.*] And then I sneak up like an animal.

One in the right hand and the other in the left?
Exactly. But I'm always looking through the viewfinder. When I take a picture with one camera, the flash on the other is charging. And then of course if one of them breaks, I have another one spare. Normally, I have a third one in my bag.

But you look through here, you click and then you look through the other viewfinder.
I'm always looking through.

Do you have an assistant? Does he also press the button?
No, never.

What does he do?
When a film's finished, he puts a new one in, or reloads the batteries. And he's the one I talk to about the shoot when the subject goes off to the bathroom! It's always good to have someone to discuss with and to make sure the light is good or whatever. He helps overall, so it all goes faster. Now that I use digital sometimes, I only use one camera; you can see on the back whether it's technically OK.

Do you have any rules with the light? Backlighting for example?
No, it's always specific to the moment – what's good for one person. Sometimes daylight is better. Sometimes when I've visited the location before, on the day of shooting, the weather is totally different, so you have to rethink it. Sometimes you have certain concepts of how you want to shoot and then it just doesn't work out, and you don't know why. Then you need to fairly quickly redirect what you would think 'right' is.

You have to be able to improvise.
Yes, that is very important. And of course it's like that when you have to take someone's portrait at their house – you have to familiarise yourself with their surroundings very quickly. Sometimes you stop and drink a coffee. Like when I photographed David Hockney: he just sat on the sofa, smoking a cigarette, and we talked about something completely different. And then I said stop, and I got out my camera and took the photo – we didn't need to go into the studio to shoot.

So it often develops into a conversation. But unlike my own conversations, they are never recorded. Henri Cartier-Bresson, who took pictures of all the great artists of the 20th century such as Giacometti, Bonnard and Matta, told me that they had conversations for hours which were never recorded. They were all compressed into a photo.

'It's getting harder to take portraits because people are taking selfies, which they can retouch themselves. People are becoming increasingly vain.'

Was it similar with Hockney?
I got there by train, and he picked me up from the train station. He was waiting with a cigarette and a lighter in his hand and said, 'I remember you smoke.' He gave me a cigarette and lit it for me. We then drove around in his Audi Cabriolet playing extremely loud opera music. '*Vroooom*.' First, we went to his studio where I took some images, then he invited me over to his house.

Tell me, have there been times when a portrait hasn't worked out at all?
Yes, of course. What then happens depends entirely on your courage to call them up and ask for a second try. Nowadays it's getting harder, because people are in the habit of taking selfies which they can retouch by themselves. People are becoming increasingly vain.

How? In what ways?
Just by looking at all the stories you see in magazines. Every photograph is retouched, and everyone expects that. But I do not do that.

So there are problems with the models?
Not so much with models.

But?
Well, with actors, for example. Then, there are those actors who don't want me to photograph them at all, so it just wouldn't happen in any case. People know by now who I am and what they're getting into with me. Likewise, I'm not interested in photographing them either. It's just exciting if both parts want to work together.

Are there any exceptional poses or unrealised things that people don't want to do for you?
No, actually not.

But things like this [*shows an image from the Vivienne Westwood nude series*], is this your idea?
This came from her. I've known her for 15 or 20 years. The pose, sitting with open legs, this came from her.

So you stripped her bare?
Well, you should know that I've shot her fashion campaigns for the past five or six years. I always thought that the best spokesperson for the brand would be her husband and herself – not some young models. It's totally outstanding what she creates. I've always been very enthusiastic about her: what she stands for politically and what she is doing.

What about her actual look?
I like the whole story: her orange hair and her pale skin. And then it came to me that I wanted to photograph her nude. She looked at me for quite a while and said that it was something she'd never been interested in doing. But then, she was curious about how it might look. So she said I should come over on a Sunday afternoon, and we'd do it.

But it was your idea?
Yes. And she just sat full-frontal right from the start, and I thought, 'Wow!' I thought she might start sitting on the sofa in a 'regular' way, but right from the beginning she sat like that. Later on we shot from the side, but the first one was this straight-on shot!

But it's not like you give any direction.
No, I did. I asked her to show me the house, and we would take the photos on the sofa. I realise if it works while they are posing, or I guide them there. I guide them because I think it's right.

So it is not really instructions but rather some kind of guidance.
Yes, we go somewhere together.

And how did it all begin? I was thinking that I never studied at school what I am now doing. I studied economics and ecology, because I was interested in how to change the world through its systems and all that. Everything with art, though, I learned by myself. Fischli/Weiss and Gerhard Richter were my mentors. There was always this kind of mentorship. I always thought that I could never really teach – all the bureaucracy would be so different from the rest of my work. My mentoring role is that I work with young people and curate exhibitions with them. This is better than teaching in a school for curators. I wanted to ask if this is similar for you?
I actually studied photography at the Bayerische Staatslehranstalt; I only learned technical skills though.

Such as?
How to handle large-format cameras. How to take pictures of churches in a particular way, so the angles won't be off, and everything is straight. How to develop black-and-white and colour films… All the technical stuff. Then I went by myself to London in 1986 and I started to photograph record covers for people whose music I liked. My visual education came from TV and record covers I saw when I was young. I always thought that when it was a good record cover, the music must have been good as well.

Which ones did you shoot first?
Cocteau Twins, a Björk single, New Order… Then I went on tour with Nirvana, that was in 1991. I took pictures of Elton John and Simply Red – that's when I made some money.

And what triggered the desire to now teach? Where do you do that?
It's the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg… for some reason now, I want to be a professor. Now that I'm 50 years old, I was eager to do it. When I'm there, I stay with my mother, who is only 35 minutes away from the Akademie. It's in a wonderful Bauhaus building situated on the edge of the forest – like where my mother lives. I gave a lecture there once, when I had an exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Nuremberg. In the morning, my mum drives me to school. And in the evening, I take a taxi back home.

There is also your well-known book, *Nürnberg*. I love that book.
About the teaching, I just thought to myself, if I don't do this now, I never will. I've become a little bit bored by the world of commercial photography; I've achieved quite a lot in that field, and I know what I am doing, know how to work with clients and so on. I wanted to do something different, just to see how something different works. I was able to select my students – I now have 22 – and it's a lot of fun to work with them.

How do you structure your workshop?
First, they showed me their portfolios to see what they are doing. Then we talked a bit about it – what I thought was great, what they could change in their layout for example – and then, right from the start, I started giving them various assignments. They have to take a self-portrait, an iPhone photo, a female nude, a male nude, their house, a series of 12 photos of the street where they live, five photos of animals, and then three of their favourite food.

Sounds like something Hans-Peter Feldmann would do…
… and I also want a funny photo, a portrait of their parents, one or a series of fashion photographs, a portrait of their professors, and as we are right beside a forest, I wanted them to photograph

'When I'm in Nuremberg, I stay with my mother, who is only 35 minutes away from the Akademie. In the morning, my mum drives me to school.'

that too. I didn't want them to sit around studying books; I wanted them to get started and keep themselves busy.

It was a whole catalogue of work.
They should be engaged with their surroundings. I was extremely happy and surprised with what they have done. That is why I called *System* and told them that it's so great what the students are doing and that they should turn around the 'system' and let me show a portfolio from the students.

How old are the students?
Between 22 and 34.

At the Serpentine [Gallery], we're currently doing this project with Simon Castets the French curator, called 89plus. We are mapping out a new generation of artists all born in 1989 or later, after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They're the first generation that grew up with the internet, when they were six or seven – and that makes a huge difference. We're researching 5,000 portfolios. Maybe we can work together with your students? Do you think the internet has made them work differently to you?
Yes. They take pictures with iPhones and embrace new technology. I think it's great. But that being said, a lot of the students shoot analogue, not digital.

The artists taking part in 89plus are all unknown – it's like this Warholian idea of The Factory, giving them a platform. We also convinced Google to give grants. It's similar to you and the rest of our generation: we've been helped, now it's time to give something back.
For me that's the whole point. A student told me, 'Do you realise that what Eggleston was for you, is what you now are for me?' I never thought that I'd have so much fun working with younger people.

Is it the break from the routine of what you normally do?
Well, much of the time I'm working in serious commercial businesses. Of course, I have exhibitions in galleries and museums, but when I work for Marc Jacobs and now for Louis Vuitton, the further into it you go, you realise that slowly we have grown up. It's serious business. What I like most about the students is that they are not cynical in any way; they are incredibly naive and just have a lot of fun photographing – they only start the thinking and analysing afterwards. I also like the fact that I'm not teaching in Paris, New York or London, which people already know are established teaching places. Nuremberg is 'clean' from all this – this is what is so fun. One assignment was to create a fashion photo or series. This young woman said, 'This morning, I went to the train station in Nuremberg and bought a copy of French *Vogue* to see what they're doing.' She tore out a few pages and recreated those images as self-portraits. [*Shows Hans Ulrich the student's work.*] This is based on a fashion editorial by Inez van Lamsweerde. Isn't it fantastic?

This is great. What is her name?
Claudia Holzinger. The next one was a fashion brand where she had to choose all the clothes. [*Shows the work.*] That is excellent, no?

That's really good! Have you found that there are certain common themes or interests in the students' portfolios? What astonishes me the most with the 89plus project – which is something you've actually successfully been doing for many years and is now common practice – is the sense of parallel realities. When our generation started out in the late 1980s or early 1990s, you had to decide whether you wanted to be a curator or photographer or artist or someone who works in advertising. These boundaries or divisions were still very much in place. So photographers would have to choose between fashion photography or art – you couldn't just be a photographer. With the internet, these boundaries have completely dissolved. The whole 89plus generation have three, four or five different careers – just like you. On one side you are an artist, and you show in museums and galleries around the world, but at the same time you are also a fashion photographer, and a chronicler or portrait photographer rather like Snowdon. This approach seems very relevant nowadays with younger people, where everything is equal and can exist simultaneously.
I want to take my work over to Nuremberg, so they can see how I work. I will definitely do a fashion editorial or ad campaign there and have them involved. I want them to photograph me, and I will photograph them.

You want it to become reciprocal.
Yes, and it will develop. And in the end, I hope to make a book with Steidl together with them.

'When I work for Marc Jacobs and now for Louis Vuitton, the further into it you go, you realise that slowly we have grown up.'

Doing this in your 'homeland' also strikes me as significant.
You are right. That is important for me. Doing this at another art academy would be strange. This is why it is so much fun. And my mother is not getting any younger, so it's nice to be able to see her more often.

It could be part of the project to photograph your mother — that would also be interesting.
Yes, they all wanted to see my mother, as I've photographed her quite a lot over the years. One evening I went out with the students for food and drinks and we all stayed out quite late. The following day at 11am, I came into class with my mother, but none of the students were there because they were all completely hungover. [*Laughs*]

entire time looking through their work. Afterwards I was completely exhausted. Initially I thought, I *could* do more. But there was so much stuff. But what was good is that the students discussed the work of others. Everyone observed and watched.

It was a collective process. I am really interested in what one can concretely say about the process, because I think that art cannot be taught.
That is a good question. As I'm not going to be there for the next three and a half weeks, I sent a FedEx box with my rare photo and art books – like Gerhard Richter's *Wald* – for the students to look through. But what I really want to teach, or rather what I hope to achieve, is that I use my own energy and enthusiasm for photography to help develop their

I really noticed that about myself. Let me show you another example which hit me like a tonne of bricks when I saw it: the student who photographed herself in the fashion story also photographed her mother and her father where they live, deep in Bavaria. It's a series of five or six photos of her father standing in the corner of his living room, wearing his slippers. Each year his family give him a new Bayern-Munich outfit. These photos turned out excellent, and I'd be really excited to see them published somewhere. I can't help but be enthusiastic about them. So if I manage to get the students' portfolios into *System*, I can do something that other professors perhaps couldn't: I want to bring the students straight into the 'working world' – which they're obviously really excited about.

'From the beginning, I told them their work should be about loving life. To take photos, you have to love life – then you can photograph anything.'

Coming back to your method: the two cameras, you don't use lights, it is improvised, it is individual. When you assigned the homework, did you give the students hints about how to take photos of a street or an animal or how to develop a fashion editorial?
I only gave hints after they showed me their first assignments, like if I thought they should rework or redo something. I'd say, 'Don't be lazy.' When there was something good or not so good, or something I totally didn't understand, or that they should concentrate on this or that. That's how I would give tips. And of course we would discuss what is good or not.

Can you give me an example of how you would critique?
I was there for two days and spent the

enthusiasm. I want to encourage them to want. From the beginning, I told them their work should be about loving life. It shouldn't be so much about the photography. To take photos, you have to love life – then you can photograph anything.

Do you think it's possible to teach enthusiasm?
Yes, I really think that is what it is all about.

I've always thought that enthusiasm is my medium. I totally believe in enthusiasm. Energy and enthusiasm.
That's true. You have to have fun or you won't get anywhere.

Actually, you could say that you are a transmitter of enthusiasm.

That is exactly what we're doing with 89plus. We take people that don't have galleries, who don't have representation or who haven't exhibited yet and take them into the active art world. You as an artist and I as a curator have this platform which we can pass on to the younger generation now.
Exactly. That was the idea. They are so excited.

It is exciting. It's the first chance to show their work.
Instead of a self-published book or on the internet.

It's direct. It's like a highway to magazines or into Jumex or the Serpentine Gallery or wherever.
It's a lot of fun to bring so much new energy into this.

I've had so many mentors of my own: Fischli/Weiss and Gerhard Richter gave me so much, transmitting their knowledge as a school of seeing…
In your case, it was very early.

Yes, I was only 16 or 17. I was bored of my own surroundings in Switzerland and I was looking for these people as an escape. I had a professional mentor, Kaspar Koenig, when I was the same age as your students or the 89plus kids. He said he would like to create exhibitions with me – I was the co-curator, and he really was my mentor. Was Eggleston your mentor?
Yes, but I got to know him quite late on.

How did that meeting happen?
I was asked by *Art+Auction* magazine to photograph Eggleston in Memphis.

You discussed a lot together. What have you learned from him?
To be free. I mean, I've never met a person like him before. He really is so selfish, he does only what he wants to do. It doesn't matter, whether it is day or night or whatever anybody thinks of him.

He never does what he is obliged to do.
Yes, he just does what he wants and that was amazing to see.

Emancipation.
Yes.

Did you get any tips from Eggleston?
We talked a lot about photography but never about the technical issues. More about other photographers, book design and so on. I had an exhibition in Tokyo in 1991 at Parco department store. It was strange at that time that they had these exhibition spaces in departments stores.

or cardboard and stuck them into the ground or nailed them onto the fence decorated with flowers. And in the middle of all this he was taking photographs. I have never seen anything that wild. And now we've actually just done an exhibition together, Araki and I, in Vienna at the Ostlicht Gallery.

Have you ever done a joint exhibition with Eggleston?
No.

Is that an unrealised project?
Yes, it is. In the book, Araki writes about me and I write about Araki. The book is over 400 pages long. Could you read this please? [*Shows the Araki text.*]

That is the story in the department store. It is interesting, because you are

'Eggleston and I just drank, smoked, talked and ate *Leberknödelsuppe*. We had the same Contax around our necks but never took a single photo.'

We got along very well, so after three days he came with me in the taxi to the airport and told me that he wanted to do a road trip with me through Bavaria. I thought, 'This is Eggleston! He is God! Is he being serious?' Two weeks later, both with a camera in our hands, we were driving through Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

Did you make a book of that work?
No. We just drank, smoked, talked and ate *Leberknödelsuppe*. Both of us had the same Contax camera around our necks, but neither one of us took a single photo. I didn't want to push it, because we were going to see each other again. And we did do things together.

So this was the first encounter.
The second after Memphis.

Yes, I remember. My second trip to Japan was with Gilbert and George. They had a huge retrospective show with Anthony D'Offay in a department store. It was crazy, that was the late 1980s.
In my case, it was 1991. A Japanese friend called Satoko asked me to go to the opening of the Japanese photographer, Araki. At that time, no one in Europe knew Araki. I went and it shocked me. The architecture of Tokyo is totally different, and somewhere in the middle, you have this no man's land, fenced in. There were these hills of sand, and Araki had this open-air exhibition. He printed the photos on metal

describing an 'energy bundle' that is frenetically, almost hysterically, taking photos nonstop. That relates to enthusiasm, which we talked about earlier. What is the 'Fucky Fucky' thing?
The Fucky Fucky thing is: We got invited for drinks afterwards, Araki zoomed straight towards me and then to Satoko, pointing his fingers at me and then to her saying, 'You and you, fucky fucky. Me taking pictures,' and kept repeating, 'You and you, fucky fucky, me pictures.'

Really?
Yes, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I mean, I was so young and still green behind my ears, it totally freaked me out for months afterwards.

And he would have taken photos?
And he wanted to take photos.

An unrealised project.
Exactly. It's obviously something that we could never have done, but in retrospect, I would have been quite keen to see the pictures. [*Laughs*]

That is unbelievable. Who is that?
Leslie Winer. She was a famous model in the 1980s. Araki shot in black and white, and I shot them in colour. He takes a lot more photos than I do.

But you also take a lot of photos.
Not as many as he does.

How many photos do you take per shoot? Do you keep them?
Yes, they are somewhere.

How are they archived?
On the computer.

photographed in colour. Now when I see Araki's photos, I think black and white has a certain incredible power.

We are not used to black-and-white images any more.
You're right.

The book is extensive. [*Flipping through the book.*] What is this here?
That is a low-res scan. Those are my two assistants in Frankfurt in a sleazy hotel near the train station. This one is my assistant, my business manager and me in a dodgy bar near the train station. And this picture is called *Betriebsausflug*.

That's a great picture, it almost looks like Leigh Bowery. Let me tell you something that Araki once told me. that's beautiful…
It's quite nice, no?

Do you think you'll continue teaching?
I'm doing it for one full year. I didn't want to make a long-term commitment. But who knows, the way I like it at the moment, I might carry on.

The question is, why are there are no schools out there that we'd consider a Black Mountain College[1] – somewhere that magnetically attracts us? Black Mountain College would be a place where Rem Koolhaas would teach, or Daft Punk, or you and I. All disciplines would be together. We do not currently have that. The question is of course, should this multi-discipline school exist? Is it missing?
Good question.

'Araki zoomed straight towards me and then to Satoko, pointing his fingers at us, saying: you and you, fucky fucky, me taking pictures.'

In the digital cloud.
Yes exactly.

That is a fantastic book.
It is quite intense.

Fantastic. It is wonderful that Araki's work is in black and white and yours in colour.
They compliment each other very well. When I saw them, I thought about taking black-and-white photos as well, which I havn't done for a long time.

Felix Gonzales-Torres always said that black and white is the resistance to a world of colour.
I photographed black and white in the early 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s. Then I thought the world is in colour. And since then, I've only

He said that Vienna is the city of death.
Vienna? True, no?

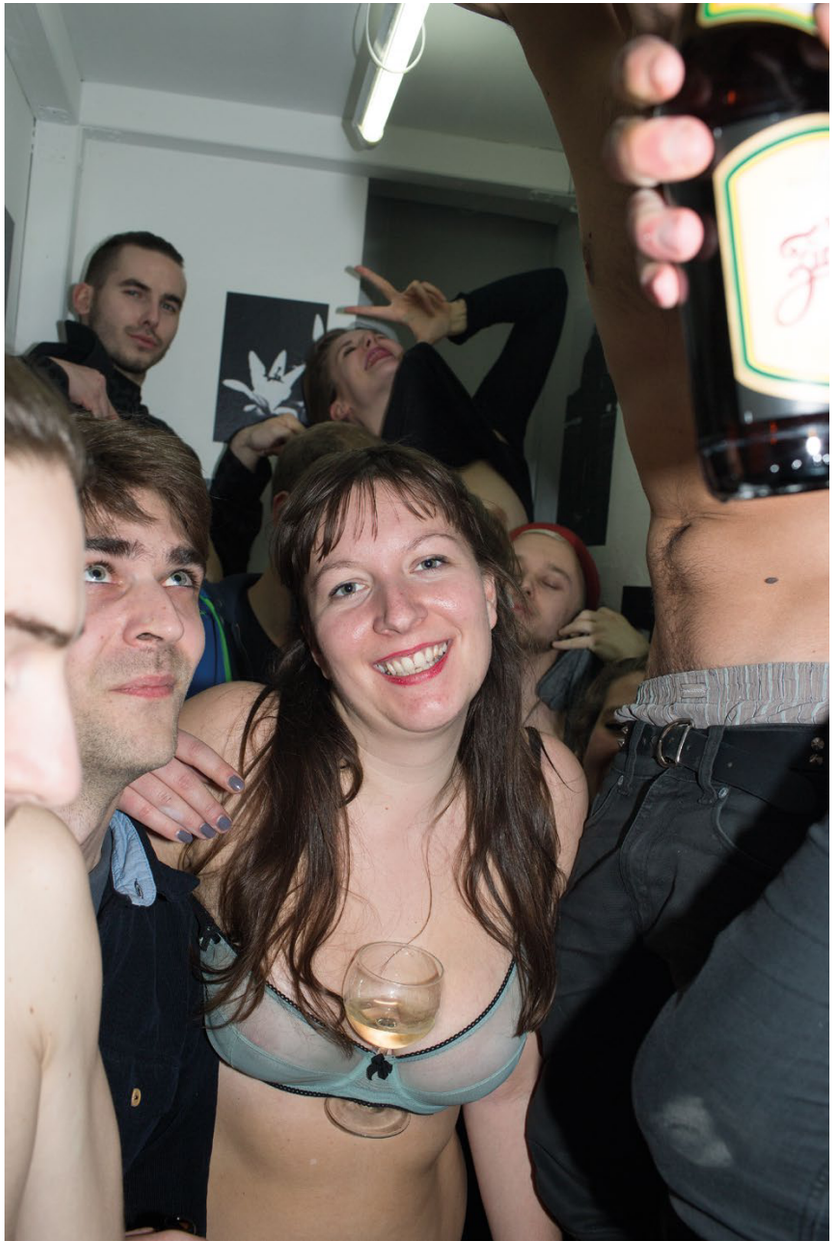
[*Quotes from the book*:] 'Photos must face life, as indeed his (Juergen's) do. Whereas inevitably death gets into my photos. I think Juergen is in the period of the active volcano. He continues erupting. I am Mt. Fuji (the dormant volcano) but something is always burning inside of me to erupt. Photography is all-inclusive. We can shoot anything, whatever interests us. I feel this book may be something special. The composition shall be able to realize that one photographer's work makes the other's photography look much more intelligible and fascinating. The moments of the present spill over from this book. These are here-and-now photos. This is now. This is photography.' Wow, Rilke wrote a wonderful book, *Letters to a Young Poet*. What advice would you give now, in 2014, to a young photographer?
As always, *wie immer*: Be enthusiastic.

1. Founded in 1933 in North Carolina, Black Mountain, was a progressive arts college. Black Mountain was experimental by nature and committed to an interdisciplinary approach, attracting a faculty that included many of America's leading visual artists, composers, poets and designers. Although notable even during its short life, the school closed in 1957 after only 24 years.

Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg

Photographs by Juergen Teller

otörhead



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____and/with____

By Darren Bader

Bryan Cranston and/with sleeping bag

The celebrity is so very rarely an acquaintance or friend of ours. S/he is a familiar name/face/voice that we wouldn't consider properly familiar. A celebrity is someone's name failing to retain continuous status as a proper noun; a celebrity is a thing as much as, if not more than, a person. The ostensible someone is ever the concomitant and concurrent something.

I've twice been able to see how celebrities might function/be as things. An edited result of this is the photos you see here – in each photo a person/thing is paired with an essence/thing.

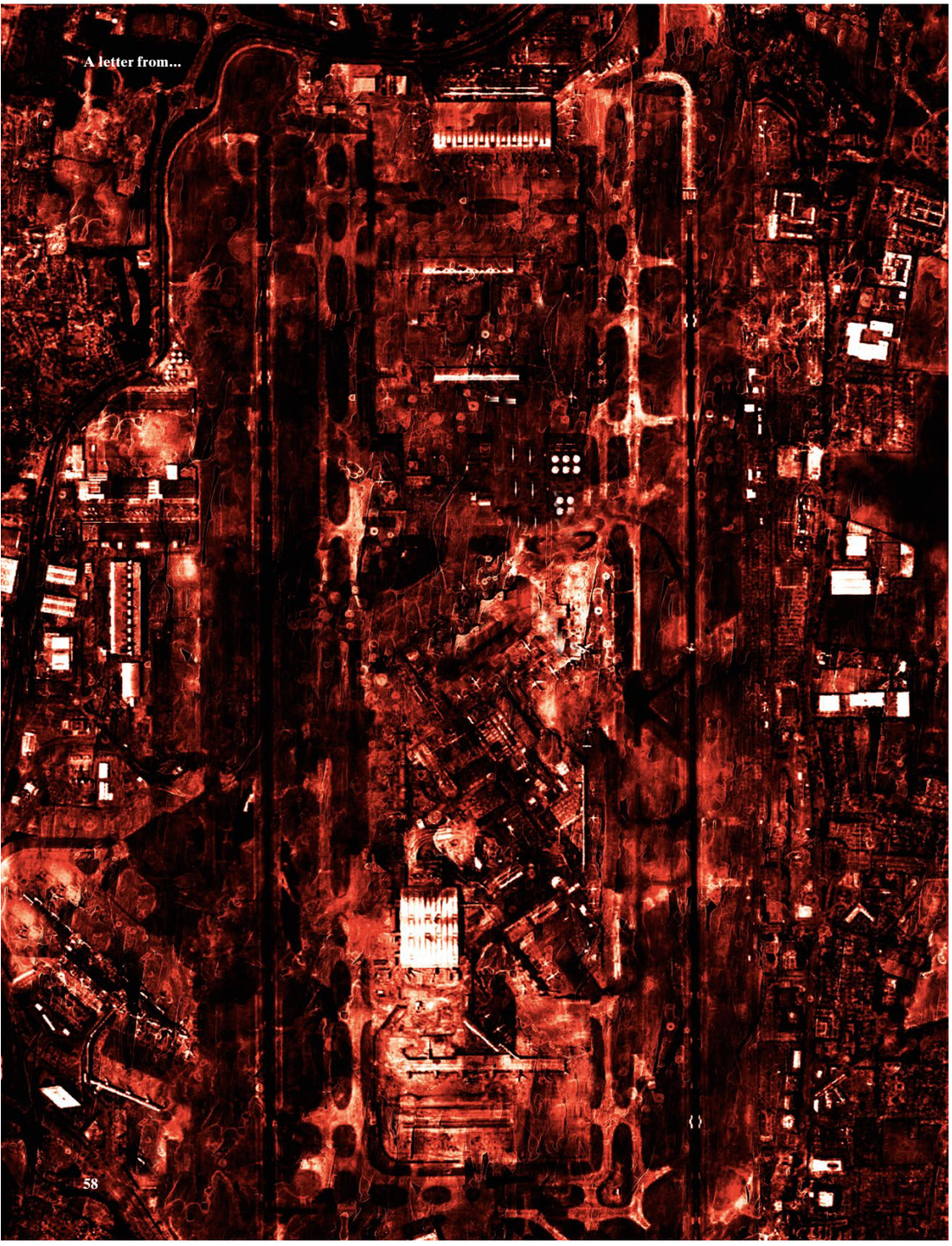
In my work, I often like to see how two presumably unrelated things might come to express/be a relation, simultaneously seen as: proto-pair, unrelated items, irreducible dyad, and anything 'in between'. Sometimes these things are inanimate, e.g., smoked salmon, sweater, glove compartment. Sometimes

Patricia Arquette and/with weather balloon

these things are animate, e.g., cactus, composer, kangaroo. Like celebrities, these things have names and can be defined by their names (and, of course, sometimes a name is shared by any number of things one forgets share that name). The things exist together for a time in space. I usually photo-document them.

Who/what might be considered a celebrity? That depends of course. I'm not interested in an exhaustive inquiry. There's too much information in the world and one can only hope to share enough to meet one's personal needs. Beyond that lies the intractable currents of the ocean of names (and fame). Words will always hold us close and will always betray us.

I'll be continuing my inquiry into limited universals on *System*'s website later this year.



The more it shows

Every week is fashion week for blogger *Susie Bubble*. By Susie Lau. Illustration by François Berthoud.

It is no exaggeration to say that you could spend the entire year attending fashion weeks all over the world. From Lisbon to Lagos, Rio de Janeiro to Riyadh, St Louis to St Lucia, there is a fashion week going on in every city, sizeable town and possibly remote village in the near future. In the interests of sheer sanity though, you should probably resist this fashion globetrotting. Just attending the bi-annual ready-to-wear womenswear shows in the big four capitals sends most on a month-long comedown afterwards, involving TV box sets and pyjamas or, if you're one of the lucky ones, a trip to the Caribbean for a serious wind-down. Sadly, I happen to be one of those fashion-week addicts who take up the invitations to these 'extra-curricular' global fashion weeks. To date, I've visited Tokyo, Seoul, Australia, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Berlin, Istanbul, Reykjavik, Moscow, São Paolo and Shanghai – with eyes on Auckland, Lagos and Mumbai for my future hit list.

'Why?' is the question I get from most seasoned fashion industry insiders. If a designer matters and is worth their salt, surely they will make their way to Paris eventually, they say. Then there's the usual scoffing that these fashion weeks are minor-league players, a mere pastiche of what a fashion week should be.

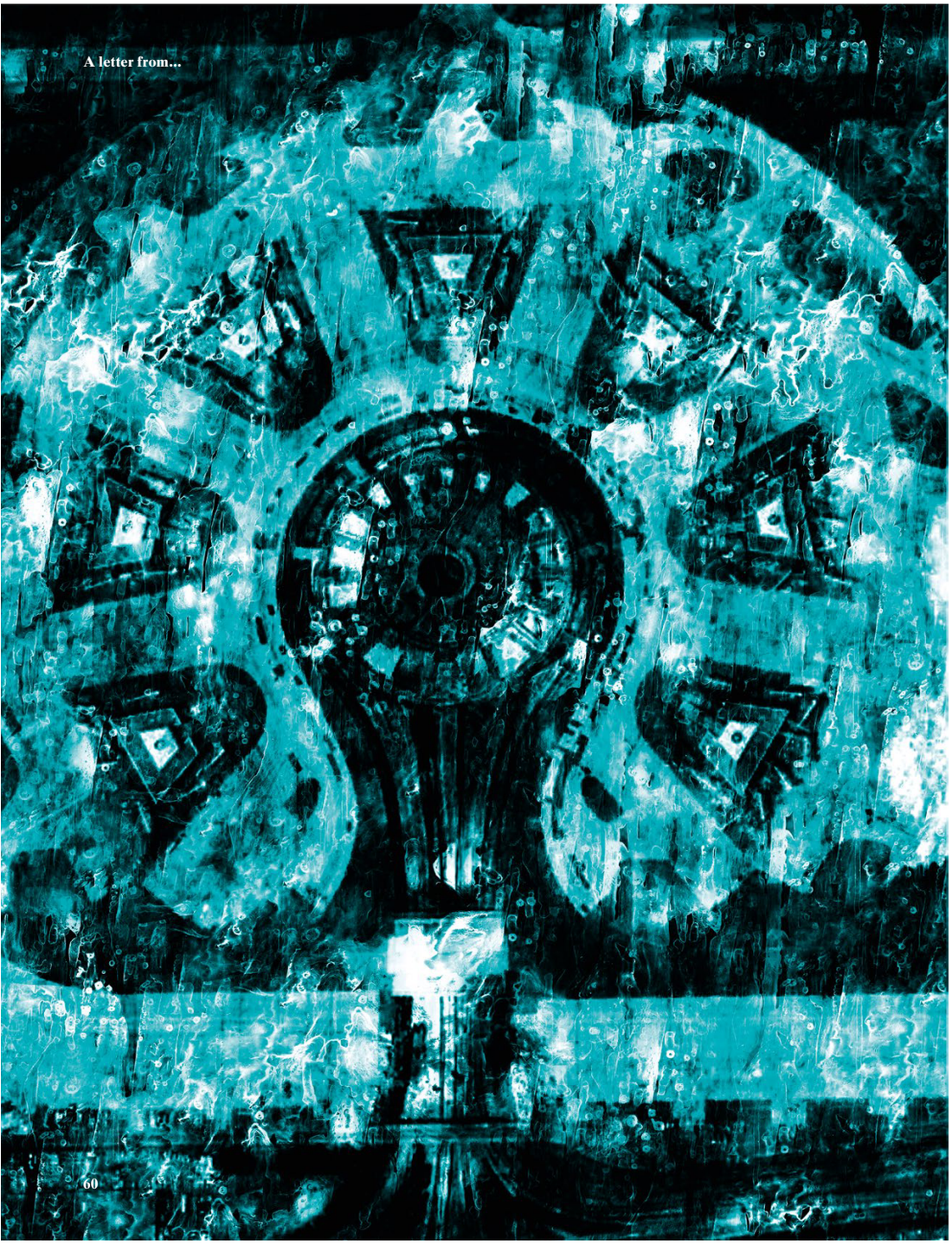
Admittedly there have been a fair number of eye-wincing moments on my travels. For a certain group of people, fashion week can be reduced to people air-kissing, downing Champagne, stumbling into shows inebriated and watching scantily clad hot models trot along a catwalk. There's the pervasive problem of not editing collections and showing every single piece a designer has produced, with an excruciatingly sombre soundtrack to accompany the parade. There is the va-va-voom casting and amateur *America's Next Top Model* models, which do the clothes no favours. Worse yet is that fashion week organisations reward only designers who can afford to put on a show, rather than those who are talented enough to warrant a show.

So we go back to – why? What keeps me going is that seeing potentially world-class designers begin in their native territory can be an enriching experience, and it adds much-needed context when they do eventually make it big. I remember seeing Australian designer – now a rising star – Dion Lee's first show at the Sydney Opera House, where sunlight flooded in to cast light on his structural pleated dresses. Or when conceptual Japanese designer Kunihiko Morinaga of label Anrealage had UV cage dresses illuminate the dark, like alien entities. They're shows that can't necessarily be recreated in the crowded and budget-restricted confines of the main four fashion weeks. In their native countries, designers can be big fish in smaller ponds, and that can be an exciting thing to see.

As the established designers from the four big weeks continue to impose their vision, product and branding onto every burgeoning market in the world, it would be ridiculous to assume that the people of Asia, Australia, South America or Africa wouldn't be interested in having a fashion scene to call their own. In fact, fashion is increasingly splintering off in directions that don't necessarily have any correlation to the fashion establishment. An independent designer like Liu Min based in Xiamen, China can do very well selling her wares on the hugely popular online site Taobao. Same goes for the crafty businesses of Etsy, which contributes over US$1 billion in transaction value. Teenage girls in Melbourne, who can neither afford Prada nor are necessarily obsessed with the collections, might instead be avidly waiting for the latest drop of Australian cult label Romance was Born at Alice Euphemia, their local boutique.

As e-commerce stores become carbon copies of one another, stocking the usual designers, looking elsewhere becomes a main point of difference. People are looking at images first and brand name second. Miu Miu, Acne, Topshop and Starstyling (Berlin) or Lucky Chouette (Seoul) can be jostling together in one outfit, and that's ultimately pushing fashion forward.

There's no denying that fashion is now global. How fashion week manifests all over the world shouldn't be judged by arbitrary standards set by the establishment but by their own localised contexts as cities attempt to create their own fashion culture. While it's impossible to see every collection, know every designer and indeed attend every fashion week on this planet, I feel lucky to be able to be a part-time fashion-week nomad just to bear witness to this global shift.



We like

Instagram isn't a business. It's like knitting or doing the crossword. By Michel Gaubert. Illustration by François Berthoud.

My work is all about sharing. When I do music for a show, I like to expose people to things that they might not know. I used to put videos, images, music, references from cinema or architecture up on Facebook, but then someone told me Instagram was 'better'. So I joined, and after three or four months, I had about 50 followers. I didn't really know how it worked. But then a couple of months later, I had five – no, nearly 10,000 followers. And today, I have 43,000 followers! And I probably only know 200 people, maybe 50 of them I know really well from the fashion business.

When I first got all those followers, I was overwhelmed – I thought about closing my account, or making it private. Yet after a while, when people began tagging their friends, I saw there was a real audience for it. And I started to really enjoy searching for images that I knew were going to get a lot of likes. It's similar to when I'm DJ'ing, and I know that a record is so hot that it's going to drive people crazy. It's satisfying.

Instagram provides a space for me to share aesthetics and points of view in a language outside of musical discourse. I do a lot of research for my work. I have a lot of images and piles of magazines at home that I haven't seen for years, and I wanted to put them online. And then I started to look around blogs and Tumblrs, and I discovered a whole bunch of people who do amazing things. Sometimes I take an artist's work, but I don't want to say, 'This is an amazing new work by so and so.' Because I think now all these images belong to everyone. It's not that I lack respect for the effort that was put into making these images, it's just the way things work now. Everything can be appropriated. The same applies to music.

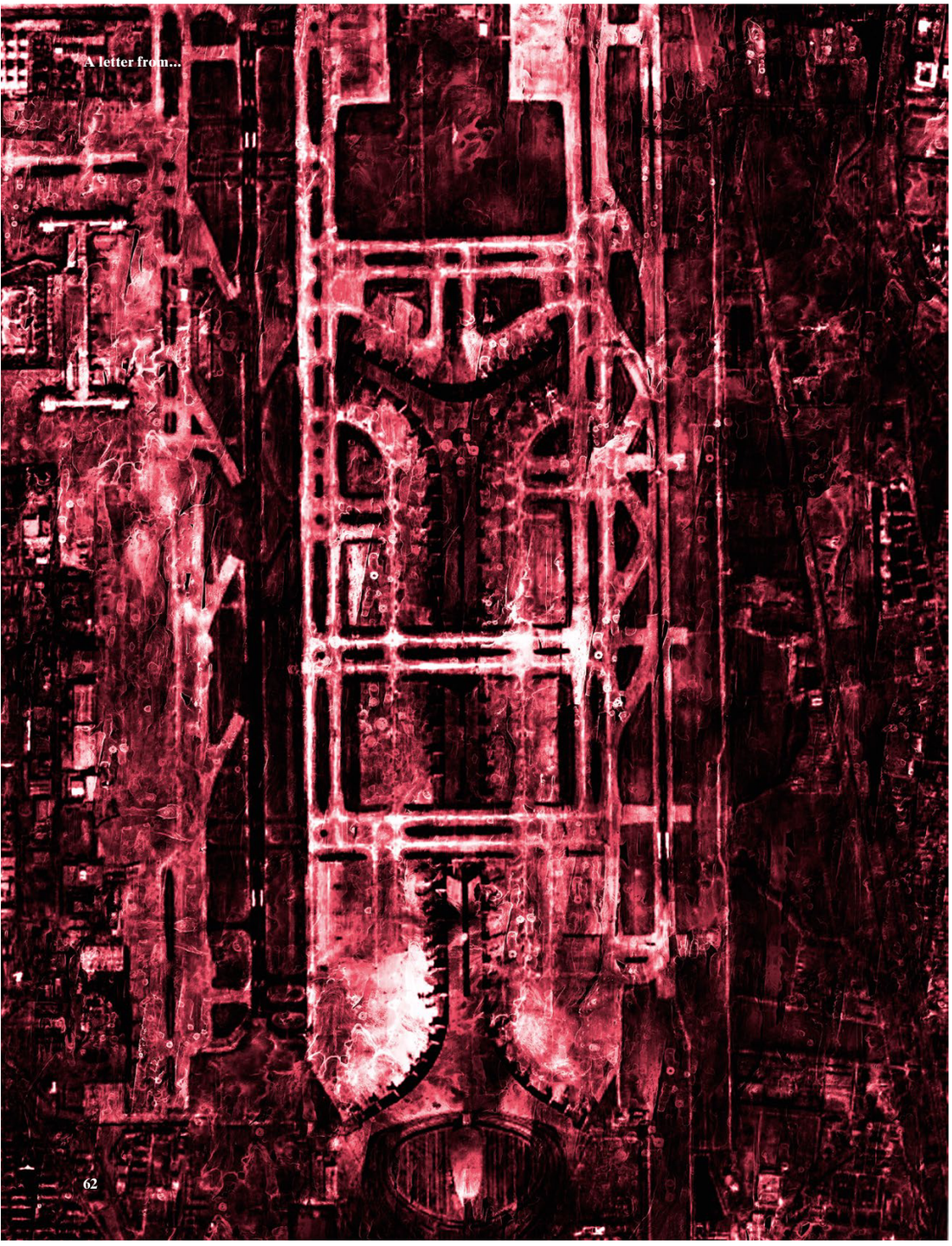
I don't want to use Instagram just to promote myself. Instead, I want to show another side of me, to people who only know me by my music. So I suppose you could say my personal life is quite removed from what I post online. Someone called me today from a newspaper in France, asking how many people worked on the account. So, sometimes I feel I need to put a face to the account, so people know it's not a factory.

What I value about Instagram is that everyone can do their own little thing. I like Riccardo Tisci's account because he doesn't post anything about his work, or fashion – because most of the time with people in his position, it's channelled through a PR. On Francisco Costa's account, he posts images from his travels – it matches what he does, but in another dimension. I also like Hans Ulrich Obrist's, because it doesn't have anything to do with him. You would think that someone like him would post the most amazing art, yet it's always just some weird text. So, for people who always have to be careful about their image, I think it's a kind of release, to show people there's another side to them.

But I don't like it when people are too ostentatious, or when they're trying to promote a product they've been given to please a PR. Or say, sometimes you'll get 25 pictures of the same thing, like the finale of a fashion show. I don't see the point of doing that. I think Instagram should be a witty take on things, it shouldn't have adverts, or be an advert for yourself. It should be personal.

Every day, I spend nearly an hour collecting about 25 to 30 images that I find on blogs, and chose one to post according to my mood. Sometimes my comments are a little sarcastic, but it's done in a light-hearted way. Like when I commented on pictures of Lana Del Rey with 'Lasagna Del Rey' or 'Llama Del Rey'. I have nothing against her, but I was poking fun at her as I think she's been manufactured to be a product. A lot of people ask why I post pictures of Madonna from the 1980s with the tag #wheniwascool. Because to me, Madonna was a goddess in the 1980s. But when I saw her last video, I thought the music sucked, and it seemed as though she was trying to compete with Rihanna or Britney. And I think she's much better than that.

Some people have launched a career from their Instagram account. The Russian blogger Mira Duma could post a picture of a cookie on the floor, and it's going to get a million likes. I don't really know what that means. For me, my account is a hobby, like knitting or doing crosswords backstage at catwalk shows are for some models. It's not a business, though lots of magazines and visual companies have asked me to work on projects with them – whether they see the light of day is another matter. But the fact is, Instagram is both very stimulating and challenging. Its power lies as a door and a mind-opener for many of us, one with no limits other than its trivial content policy rules. I think it's really funny when people stop me on the street, like two 15-year-old girls did the other day, and say, 'Are you Michel Gaubert? Can we take a picture with you? You're our Instagram God!' I like how social media can reach so many people. But I don't want my account to ever be a literal diary or become too personal – I still want to remain a mystery.



China's hippy revolution

Why young Chinese are swapping industry for craft.
By Hung Huang. Illustration by François Berthoud.

You know the boom is over when being a recluse is fashionable, signalled by a new trend of young Chinese not unlike the hippies of the 1960s. They are withdrawing from the urban rat race, opting to return to a simpler life in the country.

Traditionally, the disillusioned Chinese returns to the family farm and becomes a reclusive poet or writer. However, in modern-day China, there are no family farms to return to.

In a sweeping land act in the early 1980s, the Communist government of China made it constitutional that all land belonged to the State, thus wiping out private ownership. Thirty years of urbanisation followed. In 1982, one fifth of the Chinese population lived in rural China. Today, half of the 1.4-billion population lives in cities and urban areas – 400 million people have migrated to an urban centre. For decades, young Chinese people dreamt about making it in the big cities – a Chinese version of the American dream. This euphoria of upward mobility climaxed with the 2008 Olympics.

And then after the Olympics, Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, spread the bad news which had previously been suppressed by the official media. Families had been evicted from their homes to make way for land development, bulldozers tore down houses while people were still inside, thugs were hired to beat up families who refused to move off the land… To make things worse, pollution has reached its worst levels yet in urban centres. Beijing is swallowed by smog three quarters of the year.

So an alternative lifestyle is beginning to appeal to a very influential crowd of young Chinese artists, journalists and former executives in urban centres.

Traditionally, being a recluse is sexier in Chinese culture than in the West. To reject society has always signalled a higher level of cultural sophistication in Chinese culture.

This goes back thousands of years. The eighth-century poet Du Fu, lived during the decline of the glorious Tang Dynasty. After failing to become a high-court official, he withdrew to the remote Sichuan Province where it is said he built a grass hut for his family and lived as a peasant. His poetry is legendary in China, and the alleged grass hut has been maintained since the Qing Dynasty to today.

So naturally, as social problems emerge in urban centres, withdrawal from urban life is a popular Chinese solution. As a result, a number of hippy-ish communities have already developed outside major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Ruo Gu is in his mid-thirties and is formerly an art director for a local advertising firm in Shanghai. Five years ago, he went back to his hometown, a small village in nearby Zhejiang Province. He now spends his time making soap, rosewater and osmanthus jam.

Liu Qiyi and his wife were art students who studied pottery, and they chose to make their home in Jingdezhen – a town famous for its china. Instead of buying a modern electric oven, they decided to revive the wood-fired oven used in traditional Chinese pottery making.

Zha Zha, a former copywriter in an international advertising agency has opened Zha Zha Kitchen on the outskirts of Beijing. She specialises in using organic vegetables from her own garden and from those of her friends. There is just one table, which seats up to eight people, and she only opens on weekends.

But the thing about being a recluse in the digital era is that you are never really a recluse. All of them are connected with the world on the internet. Ruo Gu sells his products on the mega e-commerce site Taobao at innerpeace.taobao.com. Business is good.

The Lius have their own website at greatqi.com, and their products are also sold on Taobao. They are favoured by serious tea lovers who believe that wood-fired pottery is essential to the experience of enjoying a good cup of tea.

One has to fight through two hours of maddening Beijing traffic to get to Zha Zha Kitchen, but you still have to book three months in advance. Zha Zha does not have a website, but she does have a Weibo account where she shares photos of her fresh ingredients and her simple, one-table restaurant.

Young Chinese born in the 1980s and 1990s are leaning toward a slower and simpler lifestyle. Whether it will bring a cultural sea of change the way the hippies did in the 1960s is too early to say. But change is on its way.

‘It was the era of very, very dark clubs…’

From Antwerp to Avenue Montaigne, how Willy Vanderperre and Olivier Rizzo’s love of skate and club culture has shaped high fashion.

By Rana Toofanian
Photographs by Willy Vanderperre
Styling by Olivier Rizzo

Cotton T-shirt by *Trasher* magazine
Wool trousers by Prada

Willy Vanderperre and Olivier Rizzo formed an instant connection when they met while studying photography and fashion, respectively, at Antwerp's storied Royal Academy of Fine Arts. It was a bond formed by a shared love of skate culture, and an approach to fashion formed from vague glimpses of what lay beyond small-town Belgium in the late 1980s. They considered themselves outsiders, witnesses of a seismic cultural shift, as the extrovert glamour of the 1980s was swept away by the moody rebellion of early-1990s grunge.

The irony is that as a photographer-stylist outsider duo who still live together in Antwerp, they're very much at the forefront of the fashion industry today. Through shooting, styling and casting campaigns and catwalk shows for the likes of Prada and Miu Miu – and with their fellow Belgians Raf Simons and make-up artist Peter Philips on the overall creative direction of that most venerated of fashion houses, Christian Dior – they've cultivated an artistic sensibility that's uniquely theirs. One that fetes purity of spirit and celebrates the romanticism of youth, occupying a sense of calm found in the territories that lie between the gloss of glamour and the grain of grunge.

It's an approach to fashion imagery that is quite often led by their casting and a vision of beauty that cannot be easily labelled as masculine, feminine, or indeed androgynous. It is instead a vision of gender that's perhaps best described by the title of Raf Simons' seminal 2003 book, *The Fourth Sex: Adolescent Extremes*[1], for which they created the remarkable cover image.

For *System*, the pair agreed to discuss their creative dynamic, their early exposure to fashion and their approach to image-making. In a series of deeply personal images crystallising their vision of femininity in 2014, the duo have also photographed their favourite skate T-shirts – Olivier's vintage Bones Brigade[2] shirt dug out of his closet, Willy's current season Thrasher merchandise – alongside a selection of their favourite pieces of the season.

System: How do you cultivate your ideas of beauty, femininity and fashion within your collaborations? Do they come from fashion or from art?
Willy Vanderperre: I think it's an infusion of both or neither. But also so much more than just art or fashion – it's daily information, impulses, emotions, past experiences and visions of the future. Of course we go to view art, and when you are in the field of fashion, you look at fashion shows and at models. So that is always a representation, but there's a difference between the reality of the woman or girl on the street, and the fashion girl that is presented on the runway. Wherever it is in the world, you walk the street and you get the impulses of the youngsters that are around. That's always the most interesting source of inspiration, no?
Olivier Rizzo: Or you get bored with everything and you do something completely different, and you open up your world of references; I guess that everybody has their own world of references, anything you can be sensitive to, that triggers something within you. In that sense it can be art or film. Actually quite often, you treat fashion imagery as a pure fiction of fantasy because fashion *is* fantasy. Making fashion imagery *is* creating a fantasy. Sometimes you create a dream, sometimes not.

In that sense, it's theatre. Sometimes we go to create a character in which you can see a reference, and other times we just go completely free. We always allow the moment to take over. Spontaneity. In the process, for certain reasons – whether it's the location, or the character, or the fashion – things might change, go another way, and all of a sudden it might look much more interesting.
WV: You have to allow it, to free itself from any constrictions.

How do you think your visual language and aspirations were influenced by the era in which you studied in Antwerp, by the people you were surrounded by, and by the scene in the city at that time? To what extent does that still influence what you're doing today?
WV: I think there is a certain key point where during the full development of your taste, your senses, and your references, you start to connect with people – your generation of peers. Mostly, those are the people you carry with you for the rest of your life.

You grow together, and you share thoughts, reflections. In a way you develop a language between each other.

With Olivier, it's almost telepathy, because we are so infused with each other that we go from one thought to another in the blink of an eye. This process is the most natural, logical thing to us, whereas, for an outsider, it might not be. When we met, in the late 1980s in Antwerp, we already shared the same mind-set and sensibility.

I think it was the same with the people that we met when we were there. It was Raf [Simons], it was Peter [Philips], it was [the artist] Peter de Potter[3]. They are all people we grew with.
OR: Absolutely. The thing that we realised later is how much the moment that we all came to Antwerp – from wherever we came – influenced us.

As a late teenager, you hit the Academy, a 17th-century building, being part of, in general, a dark thinking, poetic generation, full of fear of the next day. It was this incredible, dark, dramatic, kind of temple, with hallways that had no end, and literally falling-down huge statues from the ateliers of the painters. It felt like walking straight into a Flemish painting. We sat there in that hallway for four years, day in, day out, from 8:30 in the morning in this beautiful, black historic building. It's not supposed to be black, but it's so run down! [*Laughs*]
WV: Poorly lit.
OR: Indeed, poorly lit, nearly no daylight. There's a mood, a certain kind of poetry that exists there. And between all of that, there was a change of culture – the break from the 1980s into the 1990s.

Ah, grunge.
OR: We arrived being major Gaultier fans, and at the end of the year it was all about Martin Margiela. One moment, you're listening to Madonna, and the next you're listening to Nirvana.
WV: When we entered the Academy, in our late teens, we were completely fashioned up. I think everybody was dressed up. Then all of a sudden grunge and Margiela came.

It was like life changed overnight, music being the catalyst. When the Nirvana album came out, it changed everything. Because at the same time fashion was collapsing, destroying what was from the 1980s. Back then I was a club kid. I remember partying at the closing night of the club 55[4] in Kuurne, in West Flanders: there was techno, and then the DJ mixed in *Smells Like Teen Spirit* and people danced to it. Whereas before, if you had played a rock'n'roll song in that club, you would have seen the dancefloor empty in a second.

That really was quite impressive. That music was the last thing that globally took over and changed fashion and street style, and introduced a new way of thinking. Fashion and art blurred together. Our generation had to deal with the fact that sex could kill. There wasn't enough knowledge about AIDS, you were afraid to kiss a boy. From that came creativity as well. You start to party harder, you start to be more creative, because you find yourself in a post-oppressive world.
OR: Club culture in the mid-1980s was something quite important in Flanders. There is actually a documentary that was made last year called *The Sound of Belgium*[5]. I don't know if you have heard of it? It's really strange but when it aired the first time, about six or eight months ago, we were actually in Antwerp that evening watching television. By the time the programme was over, we were in a total flashback, emotional state of mind because that documentary explains so much of what is considered to be the Belgian scene, or the Belgian fashion scene.

At the time, it was the era of very, very dark clubs. A club in Belgium would literally be a pitch-black hole, with the most insane, mesmerising, heavy bass, repetitive electronic sounds, later known as 'New Beat'[6]. You almost couldn't see in front of you, but you felt like you belonged to a certain world.
WV: It was very provincial as well.
OR: Oh totally.
WV: It was *so* provincial. At the same time, it took over the world. So that was the nice thing, for a short time it was the most influential music that was around.

Why did you choose to study fashion, rather than say, fine art?
OR: Well, we know each other from the fashion department. Willy went on to do photography – great choice.

But yes, I guess that you're drawn to what you're drawn to when you're young, and you find a certain way to translate what you want to say. In my case I can only say that from a very, very young age I have been obsessed with visual information. When you're a child you don't really understand how to give it a direction. But by my early teens, I knew that it was fashion that got my attention the most.

And then I found out about the existence of the Antwerp Fashion Academy.

What was fashion like in Belgium when you were a child? Did you have access to fashion through magazines?
WV: No, there was television. And then in 1984, the birth of MTV. OK, that was youth culture. And fashion followed.

'The process is the most natural, logical thing to us. It's almost telepathy – we go from one thought to another in the blink of an eye.'

'We arrived being major Gaultier fans; by the end of the year it was all about Margiela. One minute you're listening to Madonna, the next it's Nirvana.'

But what about, for instance, couture?
WV: Oh no, couture didn't exist in my world. I think for Olivier it did, he did more research. For me it was MTV and skate magazines.

Olivier, you looked at couture when you were a child?
OR: Yes.

How did you encounter couture in Belgium? How did it cross your path?
OR: First of all, the Queen Fabiola and King Boudewijn[7].

Seriously?
[*All laugh*]
OR: Look up their *photo de mariage*. The Queen actually got married in Balenciaga, which is honestly one of the most stunning dresses ever designed, I think. There was a picture of them in every classroom from kindergarten upwards.
WV: She always wore Balenciaga!
OR: With a Chanel bag, believe it or not. But it's true that that's my first experience. The other that I remember was when I was about five or six. My mum subscribed to a women's magazine, *Femme d'Aujourd'hui*, and they actually had a fashion spread every so often, and I remember always looking at the beautiful ladies and the beautiful pictures. A particular dress was a dress with lots of feathers. I still remember it in detail. It was Yves Saint Laurent couture from the mid-1970s. And it just caught my attention because I didn't understand how a flat fabric could turn into a whole bunch of feathers.

I still remember this conversation with my mum, actually asking her how it was possible that from nothing there were a lot of feathers at the bottom of the dress. So couture being one of my first fashion obsessions. And then it just went on, and on, and on, I guess. I mean, it was relatively difficult not to pick up on fashion growing up as a child in the 1970s. My kindergarten teacher, for example, she was very young and had the full 1970s look. You know, the mini skirt, maxi coat, colourful stockings, platform shoes.

You both have quite distinctive casting choices and, in relation to that, perceptions of beauty and sexuality. With your girls and your guys there seems to be a *new* type of masculinity, a *new* type of femininity. It's not mainstream or at least it wasn't five or ten years ago.

OR: That's one of the most beautiful compliments I have ever heard. Thank you so much.
WV: Yes, indeed. Thank you. I think you have to divide it. Sexuality, to me, has a subtext. I like to think more in terms of personality, that's where it all starts for me, and I try to capture that. I am very loyal to people that I work with, in terms of models. There are a whole bunch of guys and girls that we really like, you pick up on the personality that's a part of what urges you to continue to work with them.

In terms of beauty, I don't know. In the beginning it is a physical attraction. I think you have to be struck by somebody, whether it's the way they stand, or the way they talk, or it's the way they move. I think sometimes that's where beauty lies, in this kind of specificness, rather than just in their appearance or in a typical idea of beauty.

I think the personality sometimes has to outshine the appearance – maybe that's how our picks are more personal – that's the compliment.
OR: What I think is a good point is that probably in general in the work we have done together, from the beginning, we've picked a few girls and boys that we have followed from adolescence to adulthood – sometimes nearly ten years. And then there is a bond that is created. I mean, it's pretty amazing.

I remember years ago, there were a few skaters, one girl and four boys, on a project that we had done over a summer. And one morning, one of those kids arrived and something had changed about him: he was so frivolous and so jumpy and looked tired and not focused at all. And at a certain point, we were like, 'What happened?' And we see this hickey on his neck. It was actually the morning after the first time that he slept with his girlfriend, which is one of the most incredible moments in a person's life. And you're not always lucky to capture or share those moments. Remember the first time we worked with Natasha Poly, she was only about 15?
WV: It was her first shoot. She was in Paris with her brother, so we took a picture of them together. Up until today we have continued to work together. It's the same story with Clément [Chabernaud]. We've been working with the kid for ten years. I think it's nice to have a relationship that develops over time.

As collaborators, how do you avoid repeating yourselves?

WV: We are very demanding of each other. And I think that's also a nice thing. We push each other not to repeat ourselves. But then, sometimes it's good to reference yourself, to look back at your old work and embrace where you started. You evolve and continue to evolve, but also you still want to impress each other. Because otherwise why would you collaborate if it was just to go through the motions? So everything is a big challenge because, like I said, it's so easy to connect to Olivier that it's sometimes difficult to surprise him. And I think for Olivier it's the same. That's how we are always trying to push each other.

How important is it to work with other people as well as collaborating with each other?

OR: It keeps everything fresh. You open up. It's like in any relationship. You spend time together, great. You spend time apart, and then share new experiences.
WV: I think so too. Opening up to other relationships is inspiring. You start to create a world with other people – a signature – so it becomes a new world with each stylist. I am not a true believer that the photographer's world has to be the world where the clothes just get put in.
OR: It's all about collaboration.
WV: You know sometimes there is the perception that everything has to be fused to the photographer so that you can create uniformity in the imagery. Instead, what I try to achieve working with other stylists, is to have a specific image with each one of them. For me, it's also an exploration. At the end the emotion that gets into the image is what defines the photographer.

So what qualities and sensibilities do you feel like each of you brings to the relationship?
WV: Preciseness. There's nobody that is more precise than Mr Rizzo.

Of course, I'm going to praise him because he is my closest collaborator. Every pick, every piece of clothing is picked for the right reasons. When a girl or a guy is in front of the camera, he can easily let be, and is like, 'I'm not going to touch anything, even if it's full of creases.' And that is being precise, to not just iron it all out, so that it becomes just a piece of clothing. So what I think is unique about Olivier, is that he can let it be. He can let the garment live.
OR: Thank you for that very beautiful compliment. What I think is very unique with Willy is the emotion in the picture that he creates. The creative process is very emotionally driven. So, for me at least, I am looking at a picture which I get sucked into emotionally. That is something very rare, and Willy's imagery has that very much.

You've pioneered a new vision of commercial fashion imagery – what you did for Raf and Jil Sander challenged conventional advertising imagery.
WV: Yeah, it was punk imagery. [*Laughs*]

Over the years, you've probably witnessed that aesthetic develop and seep into mainstream imagery. Is that something that you've been aware of?
OR: Yes.

How does that make you feel?
OR: For that certain type of imagery, definitely we saw that creep into mainstream imagery. The more people that look at your work, the more 'homages' you get, the more major people make you.

In fashion, things keep on coming back. And then you realise that something you have created comes back. A decade has passed. Something that started spontaneously and natural becomes directional, at a certain point it becomes more understood and more general. As you say, it creeps into the mainstream. You can be very proud of that.
WV: I think so too. This is an era where referencing is blatant and almost a trend in itself.
OR: What he says there is actually very true. The reference has become the reference. So it means that you skip the original. I think that probably we come from a generation of people that reference an inspiration.
WV: Again, we go back to the beginning of our conversation: 'Where were you? What drives you? What pushes you forward?' What we always believed in was that under-layer, that emotional approach to things, which can sometimes be perceived as dark and minimalistic. But I think in all the variations that you take – as you evolve and try different things – that underlying aspect of everything is the thing that we'll always find ourselves coming back to, because visually that's what we believe in.

I think it's like you said, when Raf, Olivier and I first collaborated on Jil Sander, and the first campaign came out, I think that in the landscape of

'One of the skater kids arrived on set and something had changed about him. It was the morning after the first time he'd slept with his girlfriend.'

'This is an era in which referencing is blatant and almost a trend in itself. The reference has become the reference – you skip the original.'

advertising, it was almost revolutionary and unexpected to put something so intimate…
OR: And quiet.
WV: …and quiet, out there for an advertising campaign. I think that was very much the world and the aesthetic that we believed in, and the very same world that we still believe in.

The rise of the Antwerp Six and their successes have been well documented. But the Belgian succession at a big fashion house now marks a new era of Belgian success in Parisian high fashion. Also what you're doing in terms of Dior imagery is so radically different to what went before; like Nick Knight's famous hyper-sexual images of Gisele with a saddle bag. Working with such a big house, are you aware of that new sense of scale and how that impacts your work?
WV: Of course you know the weight of a house. We're talking about identity. There is a relationship with the brand, with the codes of the house. You take them in, and together with Raf, we explore the boundaries and push them, to create a campaign, that's right for Dior under his reign.

Also, I think what's most important is that we try to work on the campaign with the same modernity that Raf evokes with the clothes.
OR: The way that Raf thinks about all of that – how he highlights certain references, how he brings in new ideas in the quest of not purchasing a ghost of the past, but being contemporary and moving forward – is something that I think is very noble because that's what designers should basically strive for.

In that sense, I think we can try to open a dialogue with the audience as well; so that you create imagery that a potential Dior client responds to, as well as bringing something very fresh to a house that has such a historical legacy.
WV: To explore the borders. Every season he pushes the boundaries. He respects the legacy, and I think he tries to change and widen it.
OR: To bring it to today.

1. The seminal book on adolescence, published in 2003, accompanying the exhibition curated by Francesco Bonami and Raf Simons, who was an editor and contributor. The book – and exhibition – successfully fused fashion with art and excerpts of writing from the likes of Philip Roth, JG Ballard, Nabokov and Bret Easton Ellis. Artists featured included Gilbert and George, Gavin Turk and Elizabeth Peyton. *Interview* magazine called it: 'a thoroughly researched collection of everything youth culture, and its struggle against the sexless homogeny that the "adult" system of commerce and consumption cultivates.'

2. A teenage skateboarding team put together by Stacy Peralta and George Powell of Powell Peralta which developed skateboarding products to market their products. In the early 1980s, skateboarding had become unpopular until Stacy Peralta brought this talented group together and called them the 'Bones Brigade'. They pioneered modern technical skating, created new moves and their Bones Brigade videos were sold all over the world, inspiring new generations of skaters.

3. The Belgian artist, writer and curator is acclaimed for his use of internet outlets such as Tumblr. He often publishes his work exclusively online. He also worked on *The Fourth Sex* book and exhibition.

4. A legendary New-Wave club in Kurne in Belgium during the 1990s.

5. Documentary telling the story of Belgian dance music, from dark and cold electronic body music and new beat to Belgian house and techno, and the people around the scene.

6. An electronic music genre which came out of the underground Belgian club scene in the 1980s, the term first appearing around 1987 to describe a local music style. It is a crossover of electronic body music (EBM, which also developed in Belgium) with acid and house music.

7. Spanish Fabiola – born in Madrid and a nurse at the time of her engagement – married Boudewijn [Baudouin in English] in 1960. King Boudewijn had become King in 1951. She wore a 1926 Art Deco tiara, and her dress was made of satin and ermine by the couturier Balenciaga. *Time* magazine called Doña Fabiola 'Cinderella Girl'.

I first met Olivier Rizzo while I was doing an internship at Walter Van Beirendonck. Olivier also had a summer job there. We stayed in touch, but it was when I went to see the graduation shows at The Royal Academy and saw his final project that we really connected. Since then, the three of us – Olivier, Willy and I – have been like brothers. What strikes me the most about them, either together or apart, is that their work is always somehow, more or less, connected to youth. Whoever they shoot, whether it's a young kid or a superstar, there's always a powerful sense of nostalgia for youth – like a memory. It's not something I can really define or analyse; it's something much more intimate that we all feel and share.

In our collaborations, it's not so much about a chronology or a hierarchy of significance, but rather a body of work. It's all an ongoing evolution, of which our collaboration on Dior – which has much more exposure than some of our other projects we've done in the past – is yet another page in our book.

Raf Simons, April 2014

Vintage original 1983 'Bones Brigade' cotton
T-shirt by Powell Peralta from stylist's archive

Cotton T-shirt *Trasher* magazine
Cashmere briefs by Prada

Silk scarf by Prada

Wool vest and silk scarf by Prada

Leather skirt and leather pumps by Miu Miu

Cotton shirt and cotton jeans
by Raf Simons/Sterling Ruby

Silk blouse and cashmere briefs by Prada

Cotton shirt
by Raf Simons/Sterling Ruby

Cotton shirt and cotton jeans
by Raf Simons/Sterling Ruby

Silk dress by Dior

Cotton parka
by Raf Simons/Sterling Ruby

Silk dress (worn inside out) by Dior Couture

Cotton T-shirt dress
by Maison Martin Margiela Artisanal

Cashmere jacket by Dior

Acrylic handknitted sweater by VIER Antwerp

Nylon windbreaker
by Miu Miu

Plastic and nylon boots by Miu Miu

Cotton vest by Dior Homme

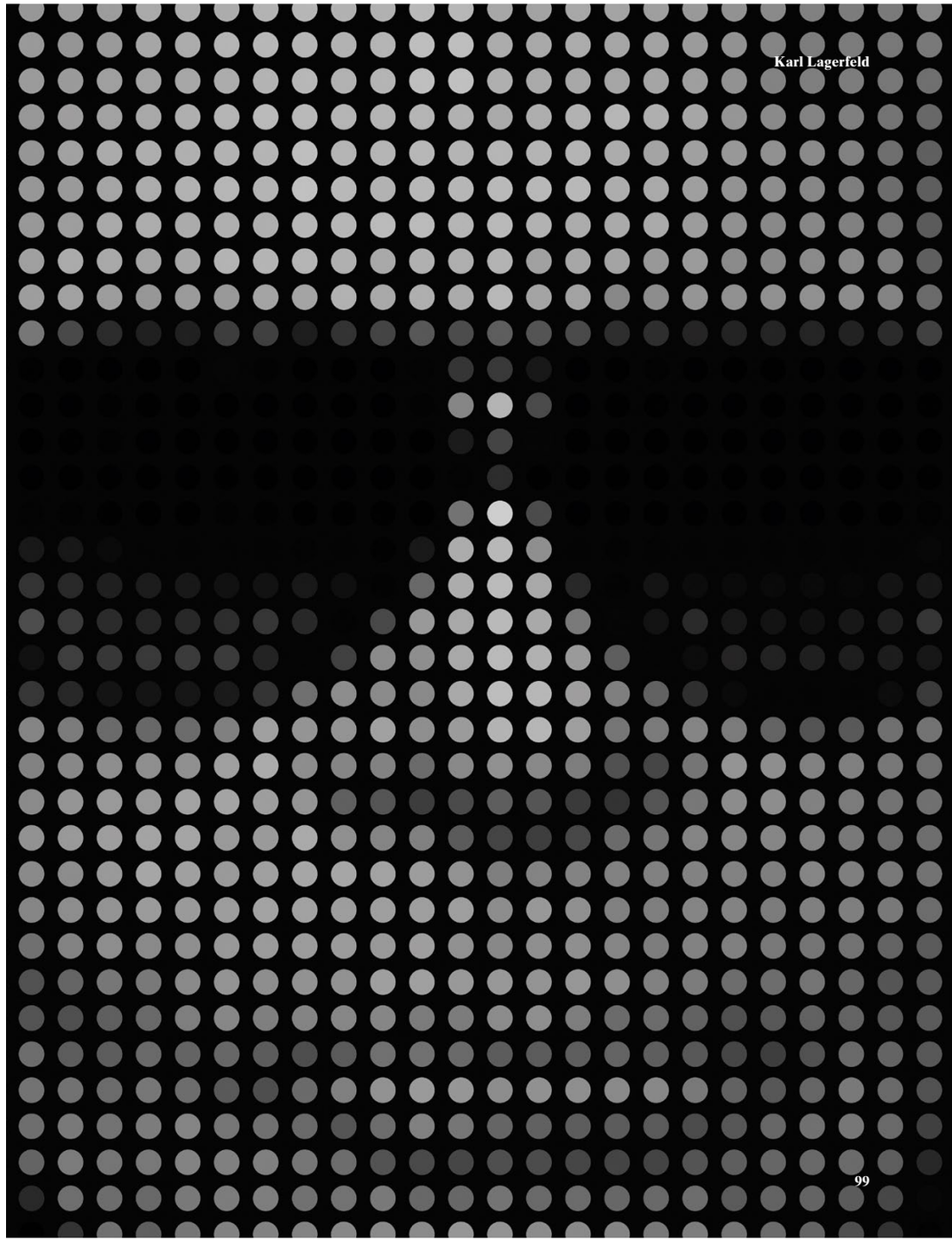
Models: Mica Arganaraz & Helena Severin @ Viva. Hair: Anthony Turner c/o Art Partner. Make up: Lynsey Alexander c/o Streeters. Manicure: Anatole Rainey c/o B Agency.
Photo Assistants: Romain Dubus & Corentin Thevenet. Digital operator: Henri Coutant c/o Diouch. Styling Assistants: Lola d'Haese & Annie Hazo. Hair Assistant: David Harborow.

Plastic and nylon boots by Miu Miu

‘My job is not to dwell on the past.’

Just this once, Karl Lagerfeld looks back at his earliest inspiration.

By Hans Ulrich Obrist
Illustration by François Berthoud



In a career spanning half a century, in a world whose most celebrated inhabitants are known by their first names only, there has only ever been one Karl. For many, Karl represents fashion. He's the embodiment of its evanescent enigmas, an icon who revels in the creativity found in its contradictions. He's a designer who loves to draw, yet doesn't keep hold of any of his sketches, though he owns thousands of books of those by others. He's someone who designs homes and hotels, yet lives and sleeps in the Paris atelier where he works, resting for seven hours each day at the most. Someone with a lifetime contract with two fashion houses, who designs over 20 collections a year, yet has never employed anyone other than a maid.

In the third of Hans Ulrich Obrist's interviews for *System* with those fashion designers for whom ripping up the rule book and writing their own comes as naturally as paying 'homage' comes to others, the Swiss curator met Lagerfeld in Paris, just days after Chanel's much publicised supermarket show.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: It all started with a coincidence?

Karl Lagerfeld: Yes, I won a worldwide competition that was organised by the International Wool Secretariat. There were about 200,000 competitors, and I won the first prize for a coat I designed. The coat was reproduced by Balmain. I went for the fitting while I was still at school doing my *Abitur*.

Pierre Balmain asked me whether I would be interested to work in his studio. I asked my parents, and they said that if it didn't work out, I'd still be able to go back to school. I stayed there for three and a half years, and then I left to go to Patou. I never went to fashion design school. I am totally self-taught, an autodidact.

Painters and sculptors have a *catalogue raisonné*. Gerhard Richter says that all of his works are early works up until number one of the *catalogue raisonné*. So where does your *catalogue raisonné* start?

I can reply to this once I stop and I am dead. I am never content, I always destroy what I do, I do not keep anything. I was born with a pencil in my hand and have been drawing all my life. I was always interested in paper and pencil, reading and learning languages – that was what I was interested in. I did not care about the rest.

What were your early drawings like?

Mostly I was looking at a lot of picture books at that time with historical costumes – no children's books. Illustrations or drawings of women from Van Dyck or Rococo illustrations. I remember one year when I did an exam, I illustrated my work with fragments from a drama by Hofmannsthal, which was never staged. I didn't only write it, but I also illustrated alongside it.

What was your relationship with art early on?

When I was a child, I found a rare pre-First World War edition of *Simplicissimus*[1] [a satirical German weekly magazine] in the attic, which I still have and which is quite unusual. Inside there are all the caricaturists from the time. Every drawing was an artwork in itself. The ones I liked the most were those by Thomas Theodor Heine and the Norwegian, Olaf Gulbransson. For me Gulbransson was a genius: with one stroke he could say everything. Unbelievable.

And Thomas Theodor Heine?

He was one of the founders of *Simplicissimus*. He was a very good illustrator: a social critic, and at the same time really detailed in his drawings. His works were some of the most commonly printed sketches in *Simplicissimus*, along with the works of Eduard Thöny and Bruno Paul.

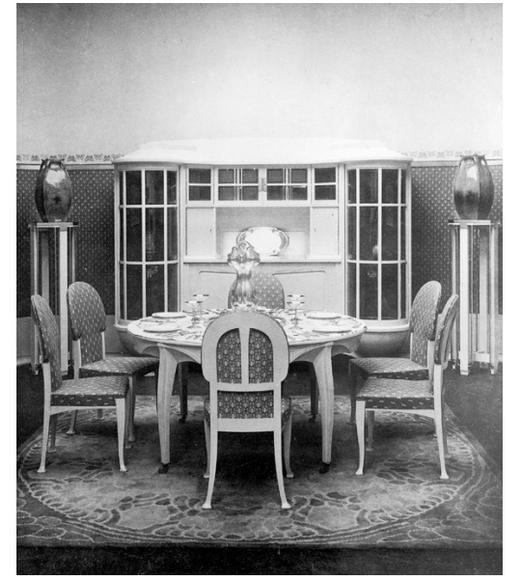
Tell me about Bruno Paul.

Bruno Paul was a fantastic and famous caricaturist but a totally different story. It was impossible to find his original sketches because the Nazis destroyed the *Simplicisimus* archive. There isn't anyone else like him. After Bruno Paul left *Simplicissimus*, he became the director of the *Deutscher Werkbund* [The German Association for Craftsmen] and then later became an architect. The *Deutscher Werkbund* pre-dated the Bauhaus: it was a modern design organisation, but more luxurious than Bauhaus.

What was Bruno Paul's design and architecture work like?

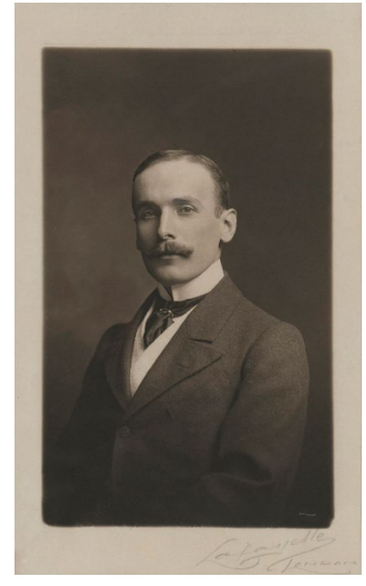
The furniture he designed was so luxurious. I have a house that is furnished entirely with Bruno Paul furniture from before the First World War. Nobody really knew about his work because so little was made. He designed strikingly modern pieces – vividly coloured, lacquered furniture – that were later

'I was born with a pencil in my hand and have been drawing all my life. I was always interested in paper, reading and learning languages.'



Art exhibition in Dresden, the dining room by Henry van de Velde, 1906.

Thomas Theodor Heine, 1897.



Harry Graf Kessler, 1903.

Bulldog Poster by Thomas Theodor Heine. *Simplicissimus* 1897. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Lithograph 30 x 20 1/2" (76 x 52 cm) Gift of The Lauder Foundation, Leonard and Evelyn Lauder Fund 268.1986© 2014. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence © LangenMüller Verlag in der F.A. Herbig Verlagsbuchhandlung, München © 2014 Estate of Thomas Theodor Heine; Art Exposition in Dresden, The Dining Room by Henry van de Velde, 1906. © bpk. German; Harry Graf Kessler, 1903. credit c/o Klassik Stiftung, Weimar, Germany.

copied by French Art-Deco designers like André Groult. I have a dressing room of his that is all yellow lacquer from 1912; a bedroom from 1910 that is lacquered in green, pastel green, a slightly darker green and silver. It is unbelievable. Another salon is upholstered in dark blue and painted in bright blue and the table in a light grey/blue. The other room was done after the War for an industrialist from Dresden. He made a whole room of total luxury.

This is your house?
Yes, one of my houses. I never go there, of course – I don't have any time. I like to decorate, but I don't have time for anything. I sit in my atelier, where I draw and live and sleep. For guests I do have another building, because I want to be left alone.

Did Bruno Paul continue working after the War?
Yes. That's why his career is so fascinating: he continued designing great buildings right up until the 1950s and 1960s.

Was most of the *Simplicissimus* archive lost and not documented because it was destroyed?
I have a few drawings from *Simplicissimus* – a part of my collection that I found in the attic as a child and some which I bought later on.

The other great name from this era is Ludwig Hohlwein. Hohlwein is one of the artists whose fantastic early poster work I have in my collection. The advertisements that really interest me are from 1905 to about 1915 or 1920. After that there was an influence from the posters the French were making. They didn't have the normal Kaiser-style advertising. For me they have something that is really akin to pop art. And it's becoming rarer and rarer to find them. I started this collection more than 30 years ago with two posters that I bought for 2,000 francs at the time. Now they cost more than 200,000 or even maybe 400,000 euros.

***Simplicissimus* is unbelievably graphic, and it astounds me how it still looks so extremely modern. What is it about this pre-First World War era that fascinates you?**
Well the first thing is that this was an era that I didn't know. Also, at that time each caricature was an artistically perfect illustration — which nowadays isn't always the case. They were truly graphic artists, who had a certain *esprit*, who found Wilhelm II and the whole imperialism of this period to be dreadful. And that's the *esprit* of *Simplicissimus*.

A couple weeks ago, I read Harry Graf Kessler's diaries, and it's also interesting to look at his recollections of this period just before the First World War. It was an incredible time. On one side, it was extremely sophisticated, but at the same time what one sees in Harry Graf Kessler's notes that in the months before the war it was horrible. He is a unique author.
I have been a huge fan of Harry Kessler since my early youth because of my mother. Even the way I dress is in a way inspired by him. The eight volumes of his diaries are always near my bedside in my houses. Kessler represents for me, Germany at its best – a Germany now gone forever. This year, there's an auction in Hamburg where you can see his final estate, his mother's things, his father's patent of nobility, his death mask… But I don't collect these types of things; I just collect books and a bit of photography maybe.

It's interesting because around that pre-First World War time, although there wasn't really a movement like Bauhaus or Dada, what was happening still managed to keep similar-minded cultural people together.
I find this whole era fascinating: from *Simplicissimus* to *Werkbund*, and the German posters by Heine and Hohlwein. I think this is an unknown era to the larger public and yet there is something to really discover that is substantial and very strong artistically.

So there are many other houses you don't live in?
I like to furnish houses. I am going to design the main floor of the Hôtel de Crillon here in Paris, and I'll do a huge hotel in Macau. I cannot build houses myself, as I don't know what to do with them. When you construct a house, you have to live in it. It doesn't make any sense when no one goes there.

Is there a list of all these houses? Picasso once said that one must never keep a house. You close the door and you go on to the next, and the next…
The house with the Bruno Paul work is now completed. But I haven't had any time in the last six months to arrange the books there; they are all mixed up. The libraries are in an adjoining building there. But the books stress me out.

‘I have been a huge fan of Harry Graf Kessler since my early youth because of my mother. Even the way I dress is in a way inspired by him.’

Exactly. It's important not to forget this time. And by you speaking about it, it brings it into our consciousness.
Yes. That's what I hope.

You have a huge book collection. When did your passion for books start?
It has been there my entire life. I was not interested in anything else but books, books, books and drawing paper. One time I told my father that I'd run out of drawing paper. He told me that I should use the other side of the paper. And I told him that I'd sworn to myself to never ever draw on the back of a piece of paper. Even today, the presents I appreciate the most are crayons, pencils, paints, paper and books.

Has the digital age changed your work?
No. Everyone around me is doing that, of course. I myself do not deal with the internet. Everything that exists on the internet about me isn't actually done by me. That is done by strangers.

Everything is on paper?
Yes, although I obviously look around online a bit. But nothing there is actually done by me.

Is drawing a daily practice? You draw every day.
You know, for me drawing is the same as speaking and writing. I never understood that no one thinks the same way.

How is your day structured? Andrei Tarkovsky once said that we no longer have enough rituals in our lives.
Yes, but in my life this is a question of commitment or duty – *Verpflichtung*.

‘I do not have a studio with assistants who draw. If something is not done by me, I’m not interested. I don’t want to try on clothes by someone else.’

I am always in a bad mood with myself, not with others. I'm never satisfied with myself. I'm always pushing myself. And normally, I do everything by myself. I do not have a studio with assistants who draw. If something is not done by me, I'm not interested. I do not want to try on clothes created by someone else. I am not a stylist, I am not a coordinator, that bores me.

Coming back to your drawings. Are there drawings that were done for a certain purpose?
I myself do not have any drawings. I do not store them. They are sent to the companies or newspapers; I draw caricatures for the *Frankfurter*[3] *[Allgemeine Zeitung]*. I work for the rubbish bin. If someone wants a drawing, I have to do it. I love the process of drawing and making, but I am not interested in keeping something I've done.

Is the idea of having an archive and a *catalogue raisonn*é non-existent?
It's all done by others. I do not want to deal with that. I need to know what I have done the day before yesterday. It automatically keeps on going on. That is my job. My job is not to dwell on my past in complacency.

That is why I thought it might be interesting not to talk about the past but to talk about the future.
I do not have a past. *Ich erinnere mich daran nicht*. I don't remember.

Let's talk about the now then.
Yes! The now is perfect, that is what I want. I am lucky to be able to do what I exactly want, under conditions that are really great. As my mother said, 'You may have done something else better. But as you are content with what you are doing now, it doesn't matter anymore.'

It is March 2014. What are you working on today? What are the different things you're working on?
This morning at work?

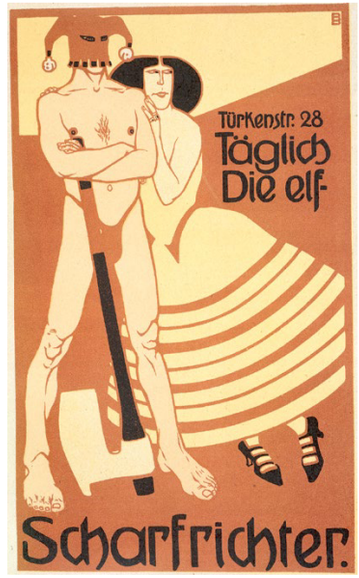
Yes.
This morning, I had to read all the press clippings from the runway shows, I had to answer all the phone calls, and I had to organise the next projects. The day was gone in three seconds. I actually had to do a costume for the tombola girls at the Bal de la Rose in Monte Carlo, where we wanted to do something constructivist, but I did not have any time for that. I also had to do a caricature for the *Frankfurter*. They'll get it on Monday, it wasn't possible today.

A lot of our friends from architecture are known through their unrealised projects; they are constantly publishing their unrealised projects until they get built. Do you have unrealised visions and utopias?
No, my job is much more simple. It is easier to make a collection or décor than to construct a building. I wanted to build a house with Tadao Ando[5], but in three different locations, we didn't get permission to build. I still regret this. As for Zaha [Hadid], it is much harder to live in her houses. It is great what she is doing, the villa is great – the one she did just outside Moscow – but I am not so sure about living in it. Here in

Living room, Haus Waltrud by Bruno Paul, 1917.

Germany, Berlin, Schwanenwerder: Living room in the villa ("Haus Waltrud", Inselstrasse 16) of Walter Sobernheim. Detail: fireplace. Interior design by Bruno Paul. Photo by Waldemar Titzenthaler, 1917. akg-images / ullstein bild / Waldemar Titzenthaler. Snobbery east of the river Elbe. Society. Class. Nobility. "From east of the River Elbe/My new neighbour is a commoner, that fellow is bringing down the area." (Caricature on the snobbery of the local aristocracy). After a drawing by Bruno Paul (1876 - 1968). *Simplicissimus*. 9th edition. Munich (A. Langen) 21.6.1904. Supplement No. 13: The Eleven Executioners. Theatre. Cabaret, Variété, Revue a.o. "Täglich / Die elf Scharfrichter" (Daily / The eleven executioners). Poster, 1903, designed by Bruno Paul (1874–1968), for the Cabaret in Munich, 1901 - 1903, run by a.o. Otto Falckenberg and Max Wedekind. akg-images © DACS 2014

Bruno Paul, 1904.

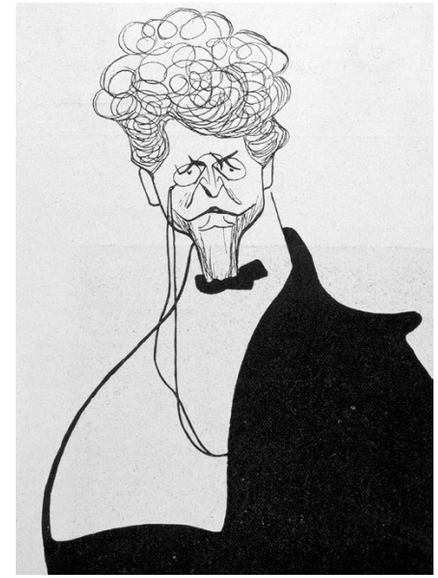


Bruno Paul, 1903.

Hose for an Art Lover, lobby and music room by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1901.

Confection Kehl. Marque: PKZ 1908. Winterthur Unterior 2, by Ludwig Hohlwein, 1908. New York. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Litograph, printed in colour. 48 oe x 36 1/8 (123,2x91,7 cm). Gift of Peter Müller-Munk. 140.1968 © 2014. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence; Caricature of Ludwig Ganghofer by Olaf Gulbransson. *Simplicissimus*, Volume 8, 1903/04. akg-images © DACS 2014

Ludwig Hohlwein, 1908.



Olaf Gulbransson, 1903-1904.

Paris you can only do chalets or roofs *à la* Mansart.

Are there other unrealised projects?
I have so much to do that all my projects are related to my work. I am not unhappy though. I don't think of myself as an artist, and I never have. I'd rather think of myself as someone who does what he needs to do, does what is expected of him, and concentrates on the world he engages in. I mean, a day has only 24 hours; there's only so much one can do.

Last time you told me about a chocolate construction; you wanted to make architecture from chocolate.
Yes, this has now been successfully realised. In general, everything I plan is realised. But maybe that's just because I am not very ambitious.

You were born in Hamburg. I was always obsessed with Aby Warburg's library[6] there.
Yes, me too! It's great. The Warburg family were great people.

Did it play a role in your life?
No, when I was a child I hardly knew of it. I only lived in Hamburg for a short time. I spent my childhood in Bad Bramstedt which is near Hamburg in Schleswig-Holstein. I was only in Hamburg for about two years – at that age you can't be that obsessed with anything. At that age I only had one idea: to get out of there. And my mother said: 'Hamburg is supposed to be the gate to the world, but it is only the gate!'

But Aby Warburg's library has not been a direct influence?
No, I learned about this later. I knew people, such as my grandfather, who had great libraries. He had 30,000 to 40,000 books — not quite as crazy as me.

When we met two or three years ago, you told me not only about collecting books, but also actually making books.
Yes of course, as a publisher with Steidl. I am a paper freak. If you would ask me what I like the most, I would say, paper. I always have a notebook in front of me. I was born a paper freak.

How is it when you are travelling? Does your office always travel with you? How do you travel?
I mean, it is quite easy for me to travel, as I travel by private jet. I have a bookshelf and a suitcase with drawing materials. I do not fly the regular way. I only fly when I have to photograph or when I have to go somewhere for business. I don't go on personal trips – only a month to the south of France in the summer. But otherwise I hate it. The era of travelling is out of date. With all the mass tourism and the telephones it is horrible nowadays. I cannot walk down the street without being photographed.

How do you work when you are travelling? Do you have notebooks?
I could work anywhere. I take myself with me everywhere, as my mother said.

Do you have a favourite city?
Probably New York. I always have the same suite in a the same hotel.

Where is this suite?
At The Mercer. In Milan, when I am there for the Fendi shows, I stay two to three days, and I usually stay at the Four Seasons, because I always have the same room there as well and the people know me. I also have a drawing table there, which is perfect.

You have worked independently for decades as you don't work with only one company.
Sure, but I never wanted to work with only one company. Also the one that is called 'Lagerfeld' does not belong to me. I don't want to be anyone's boss.
I don't want to have any staff. I don't want to have that responsibility. I find this kind of relationship superficial. I do not have an ego trip. I don't care whether the brand that I'm working for is called Chanel or Fendi. What I do is the work, and the thing that matters is that I can do it under good conditions. 'No' does not exist. When someone says, 'We have to let this go. We don't have the resources.' — that's it. But this has never happened to me.

Everything is possible.
Sure. The Lagerfeld brand[7] was wrong in the past, because they thought they could be competitors to Fendi and Chanel. Now they understand what I always wanted, that they have to have a different price point and that they have a totally different *esprit*. This is good for me because we are living in 2014 and no longer have the mundane lives that people had in the 1950s.

The curator Harald Szeeman said that his work as a curator at one museum was the most sustainable way of working. You've been working for Fendi and Chanel for decades already.
For Chanel it's been 32 years, and for Fendi, 49.

How did you make it work?
I am a nice person and easy to work with. I understand the problems of the people I work with, and I don't have ego problems or take myself too seriously. I take the work seriously, but that's it.

Do you have lifetime contracts?
Yes. Not from the start, it happened along the way.

That is interesting, as it is really rare.
There is no other case that is alike.

Do you see yourself as an artist?
I am not an artist, I am an applied artist.

Do those differences still exist?
Applied art is something like craftsmanship. There are great pieces. But nowadays everyone wants to be an artist. In the past, designers and couturiers wanted to be mundane. That is not à *la mode* anymore. Now, everyone wants to be an artist. Recently a very famous designer told me, 'In my world, the world of art…' And I said, 'Why, did you stop making clothes?' And she is still making clothes. And another designer told me she'd make clothes for intelligent women only. Today she is broke.

The brand does not exist anymore?
No.

Talking about applied arts…
Isn't it a good name? There are great people such as Henry van de Velde[8].

I wanted to mention him as well! Van de Velde is also one of my great heroes. Could you talk a little bit more about the applied arts from the past that have inspired you?
Yes, the *Wiener Werkstätte* [Viennese Workshop] influenced France even when the people didn't know where it came from. Bruno Paul also saw that in Vienna and copied it for his brand that was doing interior design. *Wiener Werkstätte* and *Deutscher Werkbund*, all of this is great. And [Charles Rennie] Mackintosh and the whole Glasgow School.

How do you see Charles Rennie Mackintosh? And his work? Is that important to you?
Very. He had a huge influence, because he influenced the Vienna Secession. He really founded something that wasn't there before. It is wonderful.

Your work covers all dimensions of life. Is the *Gesamtkunstwerk* important?
It's more that each part complements the other. I don't see it as a whole. I'm not that serious – you overestimate me. When I do something I'm not doing it in relation to other things. I hold onto this idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. I do not think like that at all. I'm like a *lansquenet* or a soldier on a battlefield. I just start working. Once the field marshal or the king is out of sorts, I run over to the enemy's side. That is how it was back in the day — essentially I am a *lansquenet*.

How did you come to photography? What was the epiphany when you started to do photography in the 1980s?
I can explain very clearly. At Chanel, we do this *dossier de presse* – have you ever seen it?

Yes, sure.
When I came to Chanel, they were done by a photographer. You do the *dossiers de presse* when the collection is not yet ready, but you have to know everything already. For the 1987 collections, the photographers were bad. Eric Pfrunder the image director shot the collection three times with different photographers, and it still was not very good. Then he told me, if it is that complicated, we should do it ourselves. I got an assistant and a camera and did them myself. And then it developed from there: editorials, advertisements and even museums. I didn't ask to go into this field.

You definitely are! But there must be projects that have been too big to be realised?
No. *Nein, das war immer möglich*. Everything was possible. Anything that people have suggested to do, has been done – otherwise I would stop. I am not fighting windmills. I am not Don Quixote.

[*Laughs*] Going back to books, have you ever had the idea to build a library?
No. I never said, 'I want to have a huge library'. I found a lot of books, I bought them and read them. I wanted to have them. In the end, there was an enormous amount of books – about 200,000 to 300,000 books.

Do you have them classified?
No, not at all.

'Everything was possible. Anything suggested, has been done – otherwise I would stop. I'm not fighting windmills. I'm not Don Quixote.'

'Recently a famous designer told me, "In my world, the world of art…" And I replied, "Why, did you stop making clothes?" And she still makes clothes.'

And it developed also into books.
Yes, all that somehow evolved, without saying that I wanted it. I only did what someone suggested, I have enough to do for myself.

You do fashion photography of course, but there are also landscapes and travel photography.
I love architectural photography and landscape because you can do it by yourself and with old cameras. For the advertisements – look how many people I have here — I have a permanent staff of six people for these things. It's a completely different discipline.

And how many people work here overall in each area?
You have to understand something: nobody works for me. They are always paid by someone else. Nobody is dependent on me. Apart from the staff in my house, no one.

This is quite unique.
Yes, but I need to be free. I want to break free – like the song by Freddie Mercury.

What kind of music do you listen to? Dan Graham said once that one could actually understand an artist only when one knows what kind of music he listens to.
I am very much interested in what is new right now. I mean, listen to the music at our *défilés*. I choose it with Michel Gaubert. I am interested in what is happening today, but I also have a great knowledge of classical music from all periods. I am fanatic of Strauss. I knew the text of *Der Rosenkavalier* by heart when I was a child, as I love Hofmannsthal.

It is interesting that you say that the past is not of interest for you.
No, the past is interesting, but you can take elements from it to make a better future. That's what Goethe said, not me.

And Erwin Panofsky said you can take fragments to build the future.
Exactly, it's the same sentiment, only put in two different ways.

You did something which happens a lot right now – revived a fashion brand.
When I started working at Chanel about 30 years ago, people told me not to touch it, it's dead, and it won't come back. But that's actually the main reason why I accepted — there is nothing better than a challenge.

It was a taboo?
Yes, sure. But I made a global business out of this taboo. This is what everyone does. After me, there was Tom Ford and John Galliano, and now it is everywhere. I like that, because the brand gives you a guarantee – there is capital behind it. It is not easy for young designers to build something up by themselves worrying day and night. And what I also do not understand are the people who have major contracts and then resign, as it is too much for them. I am sorry, this business is for Olympic athletes. If this is too hard, then they should do something else. If they drink too much or take too many drugs, fine. But then they should have a small home business and then manage the financial problems and how to survive – then they wouldn't have enough time to drink.

Do you only drink coke?
Coca Light.

That is the only thing you drink?
Yes, I never drink alcohol. I do not eat sugar or meat either.

And what about coffee?
That is too much. I have to decide between coke and coffee.

Balzac drank 50 coffees a day.
Yes, and he died a little bit earlier then I will. He was only about 50 years old.

What are you reading right now?
Right now I am reading about Edmund White's time in Paris, [*Inside a Pearl. My Years in Paris*]. I'm reading it because there are so many mistakes in it. And I am also reading the biography of Clarice Lispector, do you know her? Have you read about her?

Yes, I know her work.
Do you know who she was? She was the Brazilian Virginia Woolf. She died about 50 years ago. She is of the same importance in Brazil as Jorge Luis Borges is in Argentina. I also love Borges, his poems, it's all great. My paradise is a library. Heinrich Mann[10] once said, '*A room without books is like a house without windows*.'

Very nice. Do you also write poems?
No, I am only good at writing prefaces, which I've done a lot.

'Yes, the past is interesting, but you can take elements from it to make a better future. But that's what Goethe said, not me.'

Museum Folkwang, music room by Henry van de Velde, 1902.

Bruno Paul, 1900.

Ludwig Hohlwein, 1910.

Museum Folkwang, Music Room, by Henry van de Velde, 1902; akg-images / ullstein bild; Congratulations. Edward VII, King of Great Britain (1901–10); 1841–1910. "Congratulations. Officials from the British army fighting in South Africa are congratulating the prince on his heroic behaviour". Caricature by Bruno Paul (1874–1968). *Simplicissimus*. 5th volume, No. 6. Munich (A. Langen) 1900 p.45; "Audi Automobil-Werke M.B.H. Zwickau I./S. Leiter: August Horch". Advertising poster. Graphic design by Ludwig Hohlwein (1874–1949). akg-images © DACS 2014

What kind of prefaces do you write?
You have to ask Gerhard Steidl. He has hundreds of prefaces I have written.

We should make a list and publish it.
Yes sure, he even wanted to make a book out of it. I am quite good at writing – even more so in English. It's better than in German or French, but it doesn't matter to me.

You still work in so many parallel realities: photography, books, brands, Chanel, Fendi…
One inspires the other. It is a mutual stimulation.

What is energy? You once said that it is like a desire, it is different things. How would you define energy, as your energy is unbelievable?
My curiosity is just like antennas on roofs, you know? I want to know everything, I read all the newspapers – I want to keep up to date.

This was the same for the Renaissance scholar, Athanasius Kircher, who in the 17th century imagined that he could have all the world's knowledge all in one place — in his head, in one person.
At that time, it was much harder to gain more knowledge. Nowadays it is not that hard anymore.

Exactly. But today there is much more information.
Yes, there's more information, but people are more superficial; they know about less things. They put too much trust into machines and think that they do not have to remember anything – it was different in the past, especially in the 17th century. So much has happened since then in 300 years. Their minds were not that overloaded as ours are nowadays. Everything was much clearer and simpler. There is this book called *Das Inventar des Intims*, in which there were the inventories of wealthy people who had died – their books and furniture. They had relatively few books. Even Mademoiselle de Lespinasse only owned 80 books.

That is scary! I have 30,000, and you have 300,000. What will you do with them all?
Who knows? Who cares? The Devil may care! All that starts with me and ends with me. I really don't care. I don't have a teaching side…

This is what I wanted to ask you: you do not teach, but you do have an inspirational role at the same time.
I actually did in Vienna, at the University of Applied Arts. That's when I realised that I am not especially interested in school or the students.

Do you have a favourite book?
A few. It depends on the language. My favourite French book is of the six poems by Catherine Pozzi, which I published in a trilingual edition.

How many different collections do you have?
I do not really know. You know, in one of my houses I have a whole floor where all of my posters are hung up, because they have to be framed since they are so fragile.

Do you have an art collection? Do you like to collect art?
Yes, but I've given everything away. I didn't have enough space because of my books.

So the books took over!
Yes, because you can keep art in your mind.

One question I'd like to ask: I am running a project on Instagram. Umberto Eco said that handwriting is disappearing in the 21st century.
That's not the case for me! That is why I love using a fax all the time, every day. With all the buttons, I feel like a bad secretary! Do you know what is most irritating? It's when a computer auto-corrects! You can't play with words anymore. It makes me hysterical.

My last question for all my interviews is to ask for a handwritten sentence from an artist or an architect — would you write something as well?
What, from me?

It can be from you or a message to the world.
[*Karl writes the sentence:*] '*Ein Zimmer ohne Bücher ist wie ein Haus ohne Fenster.*' That's Heinrich Mann. 'A room without books is like a house without windows.' I sit in front of a glass window, and I cannot destroy it to get there were I want to. I see it, but I am never satisfied with the outcome. It is a strange feeling… but quite healthy, I think.

It is always a new beginning.
Do you know what the beginning of the end is? Complacency.

'In the book *Das Inventar des Intims*, it lists the inventories of wealthy 18th-century people. Even Mademoiselle de Lespinasse only owned 80 books.'

1. *Simplicissimus* was a satirical German magazine in circulation from 1896 to 1967. The magazine combined daring political writing by the likes of Herman Hesse, Thomas Mann and Rainer Maria Rilke with brightly coloured cartoons and a directional graphic style. Its most reliable targets were stiff military figures, often leading to the exile and imprisonment of a number of the magazine's editors and contributors. Initially opposed to German foreign policy in the years leading up to the First World War, the magazine later gave its full support to the war effort. *Simplicissimus* continued during the early stages of the Second World War, but ceased publication under personal and political duress in 1944.

2. Bruno Paul (1874 – 1968) was a 20th-century German architect, interior designer and illustrator. He was a leading figure in Germany's applied arts movement, the Jugendstil, and founder of the *Vereinigte Staatsschulen für freie und angewandte Kunst* (United State Schools for Fine and Applied Art) which surpassed the Bauhaus in the scope of its curriculum and number of students. Outside Germany, Paul is best known for designing New York's Macy's department store in 1925.

3. For the past few years, Karl Lagerfeld has added political satirist to his list of many talents, contributing 'Karlikaturs' often rendered in Shu Uemura make-up of leading political and cultural figures such as Barack Obama, François Hollande and Valérie Trierweiler to the weekend supplement of the German newspaper. His favourite subject? Angela Merkel, whom Karl depicted recently as Europe's empress.

4. As a world-famous fashion house, Chanel is a rarity in its being privately owned and not part of a publicly floated conglomerate. The House of Chanel, or Chanel S.A, is owned by Alain and Gerard Wertheimer, the grandsons of Coco Chanel's business partner Pierre Wertheimer. The brothers have guided the company for 39 years, overseeing its growth into one of the world's most recognised luxury goods company, with a 2013 valuation of $20 billion.

5. Tadao Ando is a self-taught Japanese architect renowned for his innovative use of concrete. His style is said to create a 'haiku' effect, where natural light flows through interior spaces inspired by natural forms to create a sense of inner calm, best characterised by his The Church of the Light in Osaka. Ando's other notable buildings include the refurbishment of the Punta della Dogana in Venice, Tom Ford's ranch in New Mexico and Tokyo's shopping complex Omotesando Hills.

6. Aby Warburg (1866 – 1929) was a German art historian, cultural theorist and bibliophile who founded the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*, a private library of cultural studies in Hamburg. The focus of his research lay in the legacy of the Classical World and the Renaissance, and he spent a number of years at the turn of the century studying Botticelli's paintings in Florence. Once affiliated with the University of Hamburg, in 1933 under the shadow of Nazism, his enormous private library was relocated to London and was assimilated into the University of London's School of Advance Study as the Warburg Institute.

7. The portfolio of the Karl Lagerfeld company – counting three ready-to-wear clothing lines, Karl, Karl Lagerfeld Paris and Lagerfeld, in addition to Lagerfeld's collaborations with Coca-Cola and Hogan, amongst others – has been part of the portfolio of the British investment fund, Apax Partners, since 2006.

8. Henry van de Velde (1863 – 1957) was a Belgian painter, architect and interior designer feted as one of the early innovators of Art Nouveau. Inspired by the utopian ideals of William Morris, the British founder of the Arts and Crafts movement, and his decree that designers should make objects that are both beautiful and useful, van de Velde made it his mission to create works that do not reference any past historical style, often radically breaking from the past by applying curved lines in abstract arrangements to furniture and building designs.

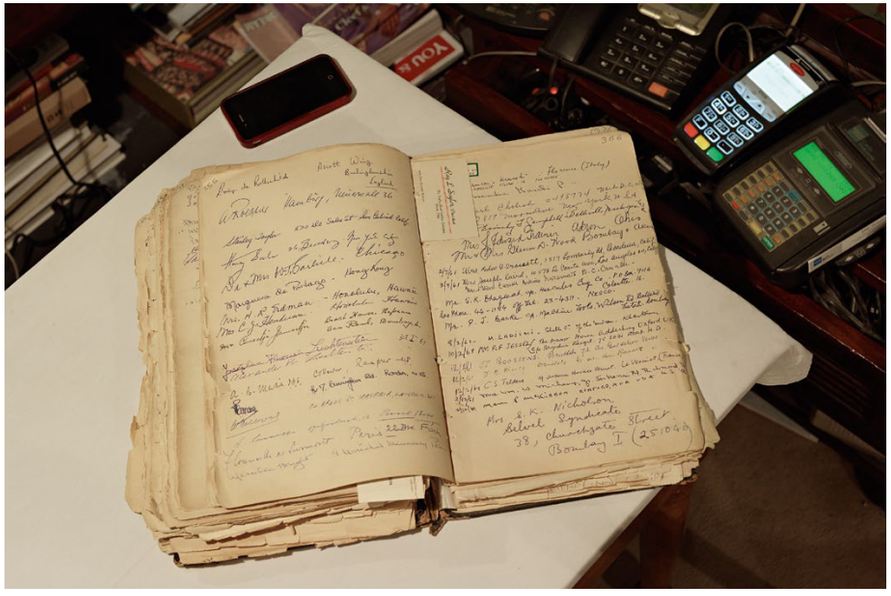
9. Helene von Nostitz (1878 – 1944) was a German writer and saloniére, described by the Austrian intellectual Hugo von Hofmannsthal as 'the most graceful and beautiful woman' he knew in Germany. Her husband was the president of the German-French society, which eased the introduction of many French artists and intellectuals such as August Rodin, who sculpted a famous bust of her likeness, to her salon in Berlin. She also inspired two poems and a number of heartfelt letters from the metaphysical German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

10. Heinrich Mann (1871 – 1950) was the elder brother of Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann, and a novelist whose earlier works satirised the bourgeoisie of Weimar Germany, and later the authoritarian and militaristic nature of Germany under National Socialism, which lead to his exile to California in 1933. He is best known in the English-speaking world for his novel *Professor Unrat*, while many of his novels and essays remain untranslated from their original German.

Gem Palace

An institution within a city globally renowned for it's jewels, behind the faded grandeur and chaos of Jaipur's Gem Palace lies a world of jewellery as opulent as anything on the Place Vendôme.

Photographs by Robert Polidori



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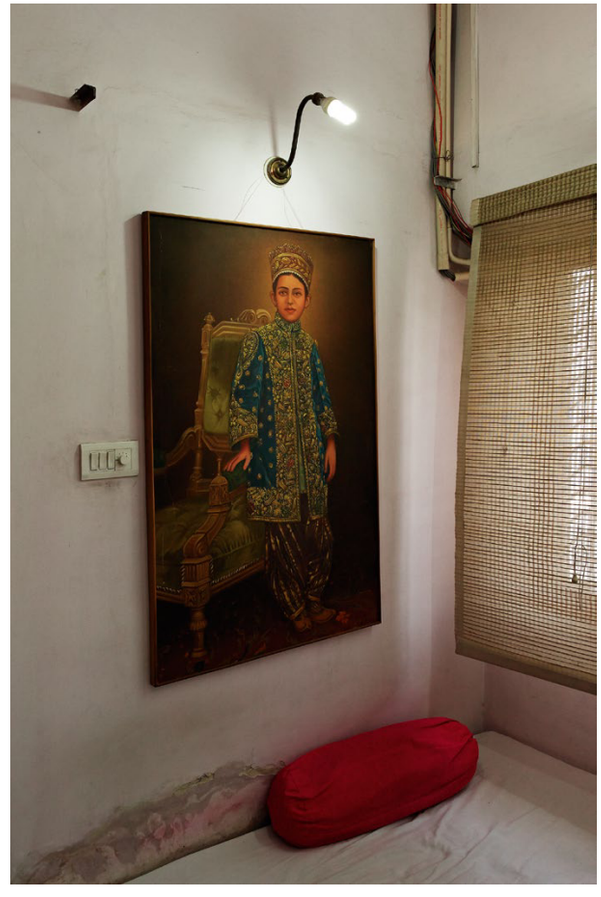


‘It makes more sense than Starbucks.’

Why LVMH fought to buy a Milanese café.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Photographs by Juergen Teller

HANDY MANNY

FEVER-TREE
OVA

OLD AND TRENDY
COVINO

OVA
MILANO

OVA
OVA
OVA

GIN MA

LA CRÉOLE
VIEILLI EN FÛTS DE CHÊNE
UVA

Although it's basically a café, *everything* happens in Cova. Working men stand at the front bar sinking espressos. Fur-clad *gran dame* demolish midday cocktails and Sachertorte in the main salon. Russian tourists, laden with luxury purchases, pick at salads called Mozart and Puccini. In the hushed back room, business deals get secured over cappuccino, while local lovers share sweet nothings and sweeter cakes.

Founded in Milan in 1817, Cova's post-Second World War move to the best corner on Via Montenapoleone has made it a cultural and geographic milestone ever since. And over the past 20 years, as the area has become globally renowned as Italy's luxury fashion mecca, so Cova's location has been the envy of every luxury house with its eyes on retail nirvana.

However, one particular business transaction that took place in Cova's discreet back room scuppered such unwanted advances. Yves Carcelle, the man behind Louis Vuitton's global success, and today still a firm fixture within LVMH, sat down with sisters Paola and Daniela Faccioli, Cova's owners, to sign a deal in which the French luxury group would acquire a majority stake in the café. In doing so, they would commit to preserving the Cova brand and look to develop its name across the globe.

In the following conversation, Yves Carcelle explains the reasoning behind the acquisition, why LVMH weren't the only luxury group with their eye on Cova, and why waiters and tablecloths are the essential ingredients in making it a global brand.

Why has a French luxury group like LVMH acquired an Italian café?
For LVMH, it is very important to own our own shops, but also to invest in the environment that surrounds them. In the Middle East, for example, where they're creating gigantic malls, it's important to offer customers high-quality stopping points, places where they can pause, meet friends and so on. When discussing with the owners of these malls, we're able to bring a broad concept that encompasses fashion houses, watch houses, Sephora, and now a café like Cova that adds a touch of class. I've nothing against Starbucks but I think it makes more sense to have a Cova next door to our family of brands.

Why Cova in particular?
Its rich history, the family behind it, its location, which is the historical and geographical heart of Milan. Bernard Arnault and I felt it was important to preserve the future of Cova while examining the possibility of its development.

Was its future in jeopardy?
There were rumours going around that another brand might acquire it simply to transform it into a store. If the luxury domain cannot maintain some spaces where you can breathe, it becomes impoverished. Cova is essential to Via Montenapoleone in the same way that L'Avenue is to Avenue Montaigne.

How does one transport Cova's context to different cities and cultures and markets where Cova means nothing?
By understanding and respecting its spirit. Selecting the right franchise partner, the right-looking waiters, the right coffee, the right patisserie chef. Paola and Daniela have the final say on those people; they'll have to be trained in Milan for a month.

There was speculation in the press that Prada was close to acquiring Cova but at the last minute LVMH arrived with a more interesting offer…
It had nothing to do with money. It came from our desire to preserve Cova in its entirety and develop it globally.

But wasn't that Prada's intention too?
There has to be a winner! [*Laughs*] To be honest, I'm thrilled because it allowed Patrizio [Bertelli] to buy another of Milan's leading patisseries [Marchesi] and to invest in Milanese history. Looking at things positively, I think luxury groups are today conscious of our environments and the peripheral trades.

Tell me about LVMH's acquisition process for something like Cova.
For Cova it was a simple conversation between Bernard Arnault and myself. He asked me if I knew Cova, and I said, 'Yes, I've been drinking coffee there for years.' He said he thought it might be for sale and would it interest us?

That was the first conversation?
The first and the last [*Laughs*]. LVMH is already in the hotel industry, with Cheval Blanc. That played a part in our decision to acquire Cova. There is a team there with the technical *savoir-faire*, which we can refer to if required.

How was the communication between LVMH and the Faccioli family?
Easy. We didn't use consultants for hours on end. With deals there's a human aspect that plays an important role. Once we'd agreed on the objectives, we decided on the sum – each sister kept ten per cent, which they already owned, and we bought out their father's share – then things moved fast.

There's already a franchise opening soon in Bangkok. Why not own them 100 per cent?
It's not for financial reasons that we do franchises. You have to deal with local produce, so you need a local entrepreneur who is totally responsible himself.

Is the development of a signature Cova product like a *panettone* fundamental to this acquisition? In the same way that Ladurée developed *macarons*…
Yes, but each global development will have its own product influences. I still characterise Cova more as ceremony than a product. Keep that spirit, keep that quality of service, keep the tablecloths…

‘The 1980s were the golden years of *counter*-counterculture.’

Bob Colacello remembers America’s Second Gilded Age.

By Jonathan Wingfield

©Ron Galella, Ltd./WireImage

Long before 'well-connected' meant a couple of hundred thousand Facebook followers, there was Mr Bob Colacello. As the man who ran Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine from 1971 to 1983, and has since earned a living as *Vanity Fair*'s go-to society scribe, Bob has quite literally seen it all. *Everything*. Or at least everything worth seeing. And everyone worth meeting.

For decades, his professional and social lives have merged into one exhilarating, celebrity-packed mission to penetrate the heart of what makes art, power, fame, fashion, politics, pop and high society tick. Bob's world has been one inhabited by Factory freaks, downtown artists, industrialist billionaires, European royalty, heads of state, ladies that lunch, and those still disco-dancing at dawn.

His writing is as astute as it is arch, as insightful as it can be ironic, as compelling as it's often comedic (for the uninitiated, go and buy *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up*, Colacello's newly re-released, exquisite portrayal of his former employer). His photographs have always captured the spirit, scandal and smells of life beyond the velvet rope.

Who better then than Bob to ask about the inner sanctum of that most ostentatious of American decades, the 1980s? The Reagans? Bob was friends with them. Hell, he's currently completing his second encyclopaedic biography about them. The Trumps? Bob wrote what he calls his 'quintessential 1980s story' when profiling Ivana just months after she divorced Donald. The Hamptons? Bob's wined, dined and reclined in every Shingle-style[1] vacation palace stuffed with Serious Art and silly money.

Not only did Bob graciously invite us over for a chat in his professional HQ, a converted Gulfstream hangar deep in East Hampton (where else?), he also dug out and dusted off his personal collection of party invitations, untouched since the decade of fame, fortune and the Forbes 400. Shoulder pads optional.

Was there a defining moment – a trigger – that ushered in 1980s America?
Well, I think to understand the 1980s, you've got to look at the 1970s a little bit. The 1970s were the time when the sexual and cultural revolution of the 1960s really took effect. In the first half of the decade, you had the Vietnam War going on, you had Nixon and Watergate. It was very heavy, and everyone was still a bit hippy and protesting. Then, once Nixon was gone, and Vietnam was over, disco music came in, which was black music that you could only find in gay bars at first. So there was just this explosion. My generation – the baby boomers – was the first really affluent and college-educated generation across the board in America; it was the first generation where women were college educated too. And everyone just decided, or felt like, dancing and partying! Then you had cocaine coming in, and you had all these elements coming together, culminating in Studio 54, which opened in 1977 and ran until 1980 when the owners Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager went to jail.

Politics at the latter end of the decade was hardly a big party though, was it?
You had Jimmy Carter as President and he was kind of a downer; he was a 'blame America for everything' kind of President, and he got all messed up with the Iran hostage crisis. It just turned people off politics generally. He wasn't a bad man and he was certainly intelligent, but his wasn't a successful administration. Most people were very disillusioned, which made possible the election of this conservative Republican from Hollywood called Ronald Reagan. And suddenly when the Reagans came to Washington, it was a great big change. They were the most glamorous and most social first couple since the Kennedys.

But the Reagans were so much older than the Kennedys.
Of course, but he was like this reassuring grandfather who was going to stand up to the Russians and make America great again. And she cared about clothes, she cared about parties, she cared about Brooke Astor and David Rockefeller coming to the White House. She would come to New York all the time to go to the ballet and to go to Oscar de la Renta's and Bill Blass' fashion shows. And suddenly it was OK to be rich – for kids to want to get MBAs instead of MFAs.

In the 1960s, people identified the so-called counterculture. In the 1970s that culture spiralled out of control then splintered. Was it well and truly dead by the 1980s?
Counterculture was definitely dead in the 1980s, or it became slick and commercialised like at clubs such as The Palladium and Area. The 1980s were the golden years of *counter*-counterculture. Reagan, when he was governor of California, was putting down the Berkeley riots, he made fun of hippies, saying, 'I can't tell if it's a girl or a boy or their dog!' He would say things like that on TV!

You've touched on the excess of the 1970s; what would you say the principle excess of the 1980s was?
People showing off their money too much. *Forbes* magazine started publishing their list of the 400 richest people in 1982, which changed a lot of things. Suddenly you became aware that somebody who was just a nice art collector who had a big apartment and threw parties, was worth two billion. And everyone had a label of how much they were worth, and I think that drove the really rich together more. They sort of circled their wagons because I think they felt exposed. Yet at the same time, it allowed them to brag, because there it was, it was public, and *Forbes* magazine was somehow legitimising it.

What were people spending all their money on in the 1980s?
Well, couture came back in a big way. You'd go to the collections in Paris, and all the society ladies from New York and all over Europe were there. The Arabs in those days used to be seated in the back row, and now they're right in the front.

It became OK to have a Rolls-Royce or a Bentley, especially in Palm Beach, Palm Springs and LA. Travelling: Concorde was really big. You'd take Concorde to Paris for a party and come back two days later. The clubs: Area changed its entire decor once a month to a different theme. Parties: people just entertained in the most lavish way, even charity balls became extremely lavish.

Then in the 1990s when the Clintons came in, suddenly it was like, hide your money. Don't show off! But in reality, it was Clinton who made it possible for Wall Street to make even more money by doing away with the Glass-Steagall Act[2], which was supported by many Republicans as well. There had been, since the Depression, the separation of investment banks and commercial banks. After 1999, that didn't apply, so that's when the banks got so big.

What was the most decadent party you remember from the 1980s?
I think one of the parties that brought it all to an end was when Saul Steinberg[3] had his 50th birthday party at the triplex at 740 Park Avenue, formerly of John D Rockefeller, Jr. They had *tableaux vivants* of some of Steinberg's Renaissance paintings and some of these paintings were of nudes, and people were grabbing the living nudes which got a lot of bad press and cost several million dollars.

Meanwhile, there was this parallel decadence at downtown clubs like Area where cocaine was rampant – maybe even more than in the 1970s. It all went too far. And then the first cases of AIDS started appearing in the early 1980s. It wasn't even named until 1984, and Reagan didn't really become aware or take cognisance of this epidemic until 1986 or 1987.

How immediately did that have an impact on nightlife in the 1980s?
Well people started getting nervous. Especially about going to these clubs that were all about sex. But I think in the 1970s and early 1980s, there was still this feeling in the air that you went out, after dinner especially, with the idea that you might meet someone and it would be OK. Diane von Furstenberg had a great line, that there was this window of opportunity between the invention of the pill and the onset of AIDS. But I think by the mid-1980s, AIDS really put a dampener on that more promiscuous lifestyle. People did become very nervous, and didn't really know what it was, or how you got it – it got a little ugly. I mean, lots of friends started dying; you were going to more funerals than weddings. That was not fun. The fashion world, and to a lesser extent the art world, were really being decimated by AIDS.

Was Reagan's ignorance about AIDS mirrored in broader society circles?
I remember my friend Jerry Zipkin saying that one of the grand ladies in Palm Beach wanted to give an AIDS benefit, and nobody came, because they all said it was a self-inflicted disease. And he was like, 'Well, what is alcoholism? Isn't that self-inflicted? That's all they do in Palm Beach, they get drunk!'

The press were calling the 1980s 'The New Gilded Age'. With hindsight, how accurate do you think that label was?
Well, they were obviously referring back to the 1880s and 1890s when you had the original big-money

'In the 1980s, Reagan was like this reassuring grandfather who was going to stand up to the Russians and make America great again.'

'Suddenly you became aware that somebody who was just a nice art collector with a big apartment and who threw parties, was worth two billion.'

industrialists like Rockefeller, Harriman, Carnegie and Mellon making the equivalent of billions and building huge houses on Fifth Avenue and Newport, Rhode Island. It was the first time that the American upper class really went wild, and really showed off.

You know, in Europe when people had money they always built big houses, but in America if you look at American resorts that started before the 1880s, like The Hamptons, it was always clapboard houses – nobody built a palace. But in the 1880s and 1890s, they built palaces in New York and in all the big cities. They also built the great museums and the great libraries. The charity balls started in those decades. And Barneys New York. So when you think about what that era represented, the 1980s parallels were inevitable.

I'd always had the idea that there was 'society', and then there was the corporate world, and then there was politics. Then the art world was some completely separate avant-garde coven. But then, I quickly realised that the art world is where all these successful people come together because the rich people are the ones buying the art. And that this thing called 'society' is really all one big group of the most successful people in the world – in Europe, maybe it's more those people born into it, whilst in America it's a little more of a meritocracy. At *Interview*, we just tried to cover the whole thing and mix it all up.

Whereabouts in New York were you living at the time?
I was living at 26 East 63rd Street, which was an old building called The Leonori.

'We'd go to the White House all the time, and Andy loved it – even though he was a Democrat. It was this very exciting and glamorous social scene.'

How did you find yourself in the thick of all this high society?
I started working with Andy Warhol at *Interview* magazine when I was 22 years old. I never had to social climb because I sort of landed on Mount Olympus in Andy's helicopter. Andy always liked to have a little entourage with him, and if you worked a little late, he'd say, 'Oh gee, want to go to a party with me?' And it would be Jackie O's Christmas party, or dinner with Truman Capote. Or if we were in Paris, it would be the Rothschilds or the Schlumbergers, or Jacqueline de Ribes. And if we were in Italy, it would be the Agnellis. So I was just this kid tagging along.

This use of the word 'society' is so commonplace, yet it's rarely defined. How would you define it?
The restaurant Quo Vadis was on the ground floor, which is where Andy, his manager Fred Hughes and I used to have lunch and dinner a lot. It closed around 1985 when Le Cirque took over. The 'in place' to eat was at the bar at the front, and you would see Jackie with her sister Lee Radziwill, Diana Vreeland was a regular there, and Doris Duke[4]. It was more the older society.

Aren't 22-year-olds supposed to want to be hanging out with movie stars and rock bands?
I was brought up in a middle class Italian-American family. My grandparents came from Southern Italy in 1900, more or less, as children. My mother's mother was from Naples, which has always been a royalist stronghold. I remember she happened to be visiting us when the King of Iraq was assassinated in 1956 or 1958, and when I came home from school, she was crying over the newspaper. I said, 'What happened? What's wrong?' She said, 'Oh, they killed the King of Iraq, and he was only 18! Robert, when you grow up, there aren't going to be any kings or queens in the world; they're all going to be gone.'

As a student, I went to Georgetown School of Foreign Service[5] and then I went to Columbia University School of Film – so I've always been a little bit schizophrenic. I'm not a groupie follower of movie stars or anything, but I'm definitely a groupie for heads of state, royalty, world politicians…

…which means you really hit the jackpot when you got to know the Reagans. How did this come about?

in what the Reagans brought to Washington and New York, which was this huge social scene where people were dressing up and constantly giving dinner parties and cocktail parties.

How often were you going out?
Oh, pretty much every night, and then I would collapse and need a couple of nights off to recuperate.

What did your average night out in the 1980s entail?
I was either working down at *Interview*, or later at *Vanity Fair*. I probably wasn't getting home till close to 7pm, so I'd quickly take a shower and maybe shave again, all the while drinking a Scotch on the rocks. I would rush to a cocktail party by 7:30, and it would be over by 8pm. And then usually there was a dinner party every night at different apartments on Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue, in many cases black tie or at least a dark suit.

Then from the dinner party – I wouldn't change or anything – I would usually go directly downtown to either Palladium or Area, and then after those clubs closed sometimes I'd go to Crisco Disco[6], [*laughs*] or afterhours places. And it's so depressing to get out of those clubs with the sun up! At Crisco Disco, you had to be frisked for guns to get in, which sounds worse than it was. I guess I always liked the idea of being a guy who could cross worlds.

How did you possibly justify the late nights? By reminding yourself that your professional and social activities blurred into one?
Well, my life wasn't just going to parties but, as Nancy Reagan always said, you can get a lot done at a party. You can initiate, like in my case, I could ask, 'Can we do a story on you?' Or, 'Can we photograph your house?' Or, 'I'm doing a story on Gloria von Thurn und Taxis, can I call you tomorrow for a quote?' It's so much easier than calling people cold. I think a lot of business deals and a lot of political agreements start at dinners.

Weren't society figures out on the town suspicious that anything they'd say to you might end up in print?
Well, I made a point of never leaking anything to a gossip column. It would make me too nervous to do that. Also, I was keeping a diary; I thought down the road I might write about this. Like I am writing my second book about the Reagans right now. Why should I waste it on some gossip item? Having worked for a famous person for 30 years I saw the press from the other side, and I was left with a bad taste in my mouth by a lot of journalists. After Watergate, they'd interview a fashion designer or an artist, and act like they were going to be the new Carl Bernstein[7]. It was ridiculous!

'I'd go to afterhours places like Crisco Disco where you had to be frisked for guns to get in. It was so depressing leaving there with the sun coming up!'

Weren't politicians wary of your association with Warhol, who was nonetheless a pretty subversive figure?
Quite honestly, announcing that I was a Republican helped a lot. When I first started working with Andy, we started going to Nan and Tommy Kempner's home. Tommy Kempner was pretty conservative. So was Bill Buckley, so was Freddie Eberstadt.

The women were always receptive to Andy and his boys, even to the drag queens. I mean, Nan Kempner would give her used couture to Candy Darling[8]. But these men, most of whom worked in banking and stock brokerage, were like, 'Who *is* this Andy Warhol with the wig? And why did my wife invite him to dinner with this young guy who's probably his boyfriend?' Which I was not. But as soon as I told them I'd been to Georgetown and Columbia, that right away would make everybody a little more comfortable. Then I would say something like, 'I don't think Nixon is that bad' – this is during Watergate! – and they would really start to open up. I'd end up spending all evening just asking them about politics and the economy, and they would love to hold forth on what they thought was happening. And so it all worked out.

Conversely, how did your being a Republican wash with Warhol?
At first, Andy was like, 'How can you be a Republican? I mean, didn't FDR save your family from the Depression?' I was like, 'No, they wouldn't go on welfare, Andy. They didn't like FDR, they hated Eleanor Roosevelt. What can I tell you?' But little by little, he'd be like, 'Oh, Bob's a Republican, by the way,' because he saw that it was useful. To be honest, I liked the conflict. I still do. Probably if I lived in the heart of Baptist Texas, I'd be a Democrat.

Out of all the people you spent time with in the 1980s, who most personified the traits of the times?
That's got to be the Trumps. I think the quintessential 1980s story I wrote was my Ivana Trump cover story for *Vanity*

Fair. She had just divorced Donald, and she'd written her first novel – there were only two – called *For Love Alone*, which was loosely based on her and Donald's marriage. When the characters get married in the book, they go to Paris for their honeymoon, and as they board the plane to return, they're handed a FedEx package with all the publicity about their wedding. The Ivana character is saying, 'Oh, this is an invasion of privacy,' and he's saying, 'Well, get used to it, honey. I'm a big deal, and that's the way it is in America – it's not like Europe. They want to know every last detail.' And they start going through all this publicity together with blankets over their laps, and they get so excited, they start playing with each other under the blankets! And I thought, this is just so 1980s. It was an over-the-top, show-off decade, and to me the Trumps were the ultimate emblem of the times.

A girl could come from Prague, meet the son of a real-estate developer who was mainly known for building apartment blocks in Brooklyn and Queens, and the two of them could become the golden couple of the 1980s. I mean, they were invited *everywhere*. Estée Lauder loved Ivana. Pat Buckley had lunches for Ivana. They bought The Plaza Hotel. All the charity balls were at their hotel, which they made way too gold. [*Laughs*] I remember someone describing their apartment in the Trump Tower as a marble club sandwich, because they had so many layers of different coloured marble.

Did you actually like Ivana Trump?
I did! It's hard not to like Ivana, because she wears her heart on her sleeve, and she's one of those people who's very funny, sometimes without realising how funny she is. Written in all her PR material, she has '*Ivana Trump – International Businesswoman. Fluent in five languages.*'

Was the tone of the piece that you wrote about her ironic?
It was very ironic. There was this quote in the story referring to the fact that Ivana had recently become the spokesperson for Cristal champagne. One society insider commented, 'I guess this means we'll all be switching to Krug.' Ivana accused me of writing a hatchet job, but it wasn't. It was very funny, but I try not to be mean to people. Yes, I can be ironic, but I don't like to be judgemental because I think, 'Who am I, or who is *anyone* in the press to come down on people because they say silly things, or because they take drugs, or marry the wrong person?' As if we've had these wonderfully pure lives.

Everyone constantly talks about New York in terms of gentrification and the evolution of the city. How did 1980s New York compare to now?
New York today versus New York in the 1980s, for one thing, is a lot safer. Before Giuliani, who became Mayor in 1994, you couldn't go above 86th Street on the West Side. You would never go to Brooklyn or Harlem. There was a famous story of a woman coming out of the Colony Club on Park Avenue and 62nd Street and this African-American hip-hop kid comes by. This is when big old chains were really in: he ripped off her gold chain that she had around her neck, and she got so mad, she ripped off *his*! And it turned out his was 24-carat gold, and hers was typical WASP-style[9] 14 carat, it wasn't even 20 carat! [*Laughs*]

Did you ever find yourself personally in danger?
Yeah, I was mugged twice, and I had my car stolen on Third Avenue and 70th Street in the 1980s. The police called me and said that my Audi had been stripped of everything – tyres, seats, everything – and it had been pushed from this park under the West Side Highway that is elevated, into a ravine where it was lying on top of 20 other cars.

These days, of course, you can go almost anywhere, because every place has been gentrified. The downside of that is kids can't afford to live anywhere. And when young people can't come to New York out of college, or even out of high school – trying to be actors, trying to be models, trying to be artists, bankers, or whatever – the city starts losing some of its energy. And in the long term, that's not going to be healthy.

Were the 1980s the last golden era of New York?
Somehow I'm a big believer in New York. I think it will always thrive and reinvent itself. That said, 9/11 almost put an end to us. That was a party pooper, to say the least. And I think today's social life is coloured by an underlying anxiety for your personal safety – which started with 9/11 – and fear of another major terrorist attack, including a nuclear bomb or a dirty bomb. We know we are the number-one target because we're Wall Street, because we're a Jewish city, because we're the financial capital of the West. I think Washington and New York are where the extreme Islamic radicals are still trying to find a way to make a big splash.

What's the current climate of America's social scene?
I think Washington is totally dead, because we've had two Presidents and First Ladies now who basically don't really like to entertain, and who only have one state dinner a year. And when the White House isn't social, nobody wants to outshine the White House, so the embassies don't entertain either. When you do go to parties these days, a lot of it is transactional; a lot of it is about business; a lot of it is people on the make, people selling things. Which isn't always a bad thing. What's going on in the art world – with art becoming a kind of commodity, and prices going through the roof where you have a Cézanne going for $250 million and Warhols going for $110 million – has brought even more action to New York, as the capital of the art world. Today, most of the parties are art connected, or being given by art galleries, or dealers, or collectors, art charities, museums. I think museums are the new discos!

'This African-American hip-hop kid ripped of her gold chain. She got so mad, she ripped off his! It turned out his was 24-carat gold, hers was only 14.'

1. A type of architecture commonly used in large holiday homes in the Hamptons. In Shingle-style architecture, the shingled surfaces of Colonial-American architecture was adopted.

2. This act was passed in 1933 in the wake of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and separated investment and commercial banking activities.

3. Saul Steinberg was an American businessman and corporate raider. According to the *New York Times*: 'Steinberg came to symbolize whole eras in the fast-changing Wall Street culture… By the 1980s Mr Steinberg, a portly man with a high-pitched voice, had become very rich, and was not afraid to show it.'

4. Doris Duke was an American tobacco heiress. She was in the newspapers from birth, and when she inherited at the age of 12, she became 'the richest girl in the world'. Duke was a columnist, art collector, philanthropist and horticulturalist.

5. The Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service is a school of international affairs in Georgetown University in Washington DC. Founded by Jesuit priest Edmund A Walsh in 1919, it ranks amongst the top foreign-service schools, and it is first in the world at the graduate level.

6. Infamous Chelsea gay club of the late-1970s and early-1980s, known for its abundance of sex and drugs.

7. American investigative journalist and author famous for uncovering and reporting on the Watergate scandal, with Bob Woodward at *The Washington Post*.

8. An American actress and transsexual, Candy Darling is best known as a Warhol Superstar. She starred in Andy Warhol's films *Flesh* and *Women in Revolt*, and was a muse for The Velvet Underground.

9. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) is the term for a closed group of high-status Americans, a group believed to control disproportionate social and financial power and whose family wealth and elite connections allow them a degree of privilege held by few others. WASPs are prominent at expensive private prep schools, Ivy-League universities and prestigious liberal-art colleges. WASP families often pursue hobbies such as boating, fencing, yachting, golf, tennis and equestrianism – tending to mingle at private clubs, live in the same neighbourhoods and attend the same churches. WASP daughters are usually presented, age 17 or 18, at exclusive debutante balls, such as The Interntational Debutante Ball at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, marking their entrance into high society.

‘It was Andy Warhol who got me into the habit of saving my invitations. He used to save *everything*: invitations, letters, fan mail, press releases… and he’d put them all in corrugated cardboard boxes that he called “Time Capsules”. He started them in 1974: he’d write the date on the box then throw everything in. If you gave him a tie for his birthday, it would go in the box; and when the box was filled, he’d write the date and seal it up. There are over 650 of these boxes in the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.

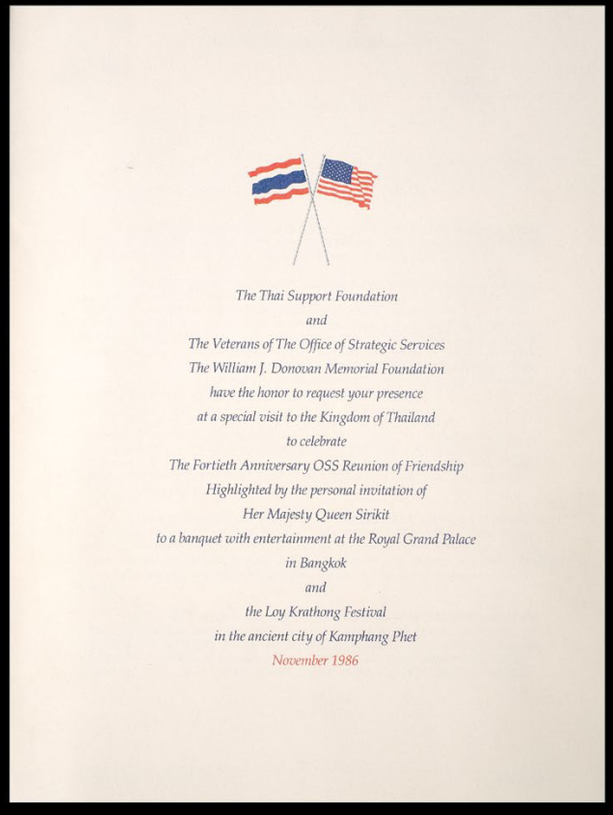
Looking now at handwritten invitations I received 30 years ago, they seem nostalgic, almost quaint. I mean, a few people still write you a proper thank-you note, but most just send an email. These days, invitations are increasingly sent as e-vites, which I hate. You get an e-vite, you get 200 more emails, and then it’s hard to find the e-vite because it didn’t come from Mick Jagger, it came from somebody working for Mick Jagger whose name you’ve never heard of before.

I’ve never been one to separate the frivolous and the serious, and this is certainly reflected in the invitations I’ve kept over the years. I don’t see why you can’t do serious work in whatever your field is and then go out at night and have a frivolous time. And I, admittedly, can be very frivolous. Fred Hughes, Andy’s manager, had a great line: “Yes, we are superficial at The Factory, but we’re *deeply* superficial.”

I haven’t looked at these boxes since I threw the things in them all those years ago, so this is a discovery for me.’

Bob Colacello, March 2014

‘Area was launched probably in 1981. It was at 157 Hudson Street in Tribeca, which was just getting started around that time. Eric Goode was the best known of the four owners. Once upon a time, Area had a different theme about every six weeks, so they’d be constantly redoing the club. And very often they’d get artists involved, and the invites were usually pretty interesting.’



The Thai Support Foundation
and
The Veterans of The Office of Strategic Services
The William J. Donovan Memorial Foundation
have the honor to request your presence
at a special visit to the Kingdom of Thailand
to celebrate
The Fortieth Anniversary OSS Reunion of Friendship
Highlighted by the personal invitation of
Her Majesty Queen Sirikit
to a banquet with entertainment at the Royal Grand Palace
in Bangkok
and
the Loy Krathong Festival
in the ancient city of Kamphang Phet
November 1986

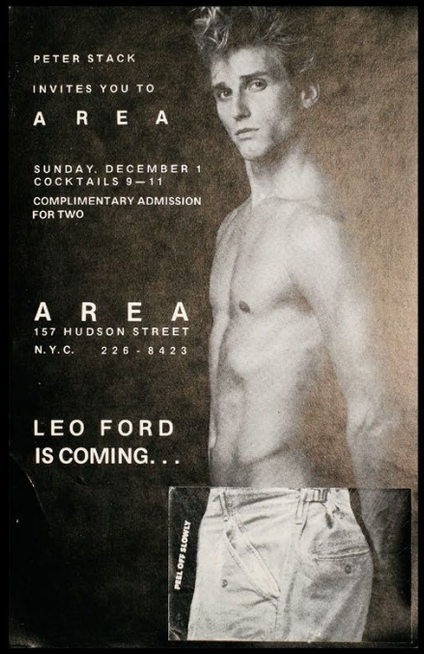
'The first husband of Mercedes Bass, Francis Kellogg who was a former ambassador, put together a whole group of us to go to the 200th anniversary of the Thai monarchy in 1982. I went with Sao Schlumberger, and you had to pay $10,000 for a week of grand parties. I convinced Andy to pay for me because I could get a lot of portrait commissions out of the trip.

After I left *Interview*, Andy always wanted to get me to come back. He'd say, "Bob, if *Interview*'s too much for you, you could just sell portraits." And I would say, "No Andy, I don't want to sell portraits. I want you to pay me enough to run *Interview*, so I don't have to run around the world selling portraits for 20 per cent commission."'

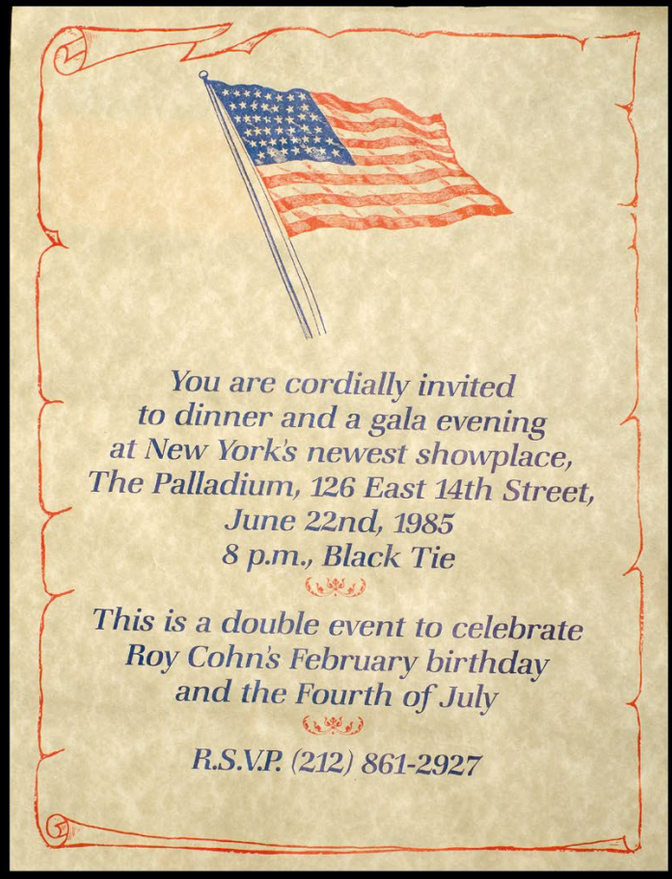
'The art world went conservative in the 1980s. You wouldn't think of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring or Julian Schnabel as conservative, but in art terms they were.

In the 1970s, painting was declared dead. Everything had to be Minimalist painting, or Conceptual Art, or Performance Art. So in the 1980s, suddenly there was this generation of young artists like Eric Fischl coming out of art schools who all wanted to paint figurative things again. In art terms that was considered reactionary; they were the new avant-garde.

Andy always managed to avoid becoming orthodox. He liked to be unclassifiable. In interviews if people asked, "Are you gay?" He would just say, "Oh, sex is such hard work." He wanted to remain mysterious and his own guy.'

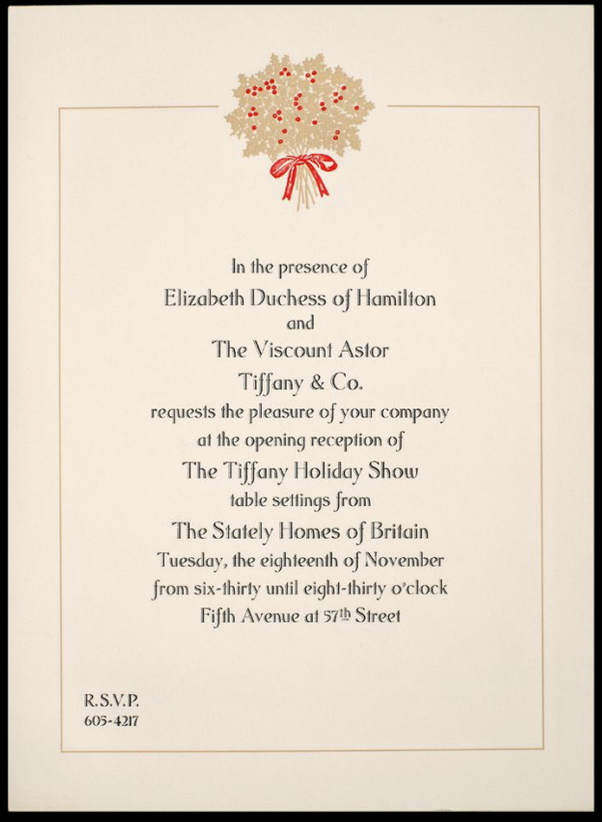


'"*Leo Ford is coming…*" Leo Ford was the most famous gay porn star of the decade. It has to be said that cocaine was rampant in those downtown clubs like Area – maybe even more so than in the 1970s. I'd be at the uptown dinner parties on 5th and Park Avenues *and* the downtown clubs afterwards, so I was being doubly decadent and doubly excessive. I don't know, it all went too far. And then the first cases of AIDS started appearing in the early 1980s. It wasn't even given a name until 1984, and Reagan didn't really become aware or take cognisance of this epidemic until 1986 or 1987.'



'Roy Cohn was the most powerful lawyer in New York. He was a real fixer. He was a Democrat in New York and a Republican nationally. He was in with the Reagans. He was Ronald Perelman's lawyer, Donald Trump's lawyer, Estée Lauder's lawyer. He also happened to be Senator McCarthy's right-hand man back in the 1950s. The fact that a McCarthy associate would be glorified at a downtown disco that called itself a 'showplace' was a bit much!

Palladium was extravagant and huge. It was Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager's comeback club after they went to jail. They copied Area, integrating art into the place, with the big Basquiat mural. Palladium was the quintessentially 1980s club. I mean, no club in the 1970s would have called itself a 'showplace', nor would it have held black tie parties.'



'"*In the presence of Elizabeth Duchess of Hamilton and The Viscount Astor, Tiffany & Co. requests the pleasure of your company at the opening reception of The Tiffany Holiday Show. Table settings from The Stately Homes of Britain.*"

Table settings became a huge thing in the 1980s. I mean, the Reagan group, they never gave up on table settings. Nancy Reagan, Betsy Bloomingdale and Lee Annenberg could sit around for hours talking about Flora Danica, and debate who owned the most of this very expensive china.'

'This is a souvenir cigar from Claudia Cohen and Ronald Perelman's wedding party. These were two prosperous, square, conservative Jewish families who *hated* drugs.

Andy arrived with Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Claudia had a fit. I went over to say hello and Andy said, "Jean-Michel, you know Bob, right?" And Jean-Michel just grunted at me. He never forgave me for putting Nancy Reagan on the cover of *Interview*. Andy was trying to get Jean-Michel to be nice to me, because they were like pariahs at this dinner. Andy said, "Oh, Jean-Michel, Bob likes to smoke pot." He said, "You want some pot?" I said, "Sure," thinking he was going to hand me a joint. He takes out a huge branch of marijuana and hands it to me! I was so pissed off, thinking, "If Ronald Perelman sees me with *this* in my hand…"'

'After Area closed, Eric Goode started MK, which was even more lavish. It was set over several levels, with a dining room and billiards room. The invitation reads, "*You are invited for cocktails at MK following Eric Goode's opening at Bess Cutler Gallery.*" And there's a tiny pearl in the box.

No one could ever figure out what MK stood for. That was an on-going mystery.'

All photographs Robert Nethery

'This was Estée Lauder's Christmas card: a picture of her house in Palm Beach. Estée Lauder once asked me to go with her to a Bloomingdale's party. Andy was upstairs and when he saw me with Estée, he was like, "Oh gee Bob, is Estée your date? Can you ask her for some ads for the magazine?" I just replied, "Andy, I don't work for you anymore."'

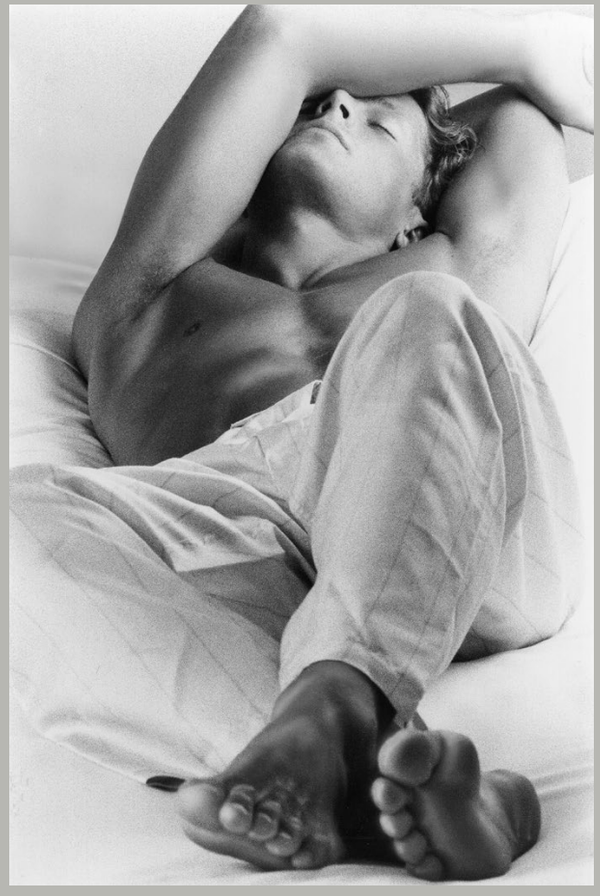
‘Giorgio and I both knew we were making a bit of history.’

How Aldo Fallai defined the Armani man.

Emporio Armani
Spring/Summer 1985

By Giusi Ferrè

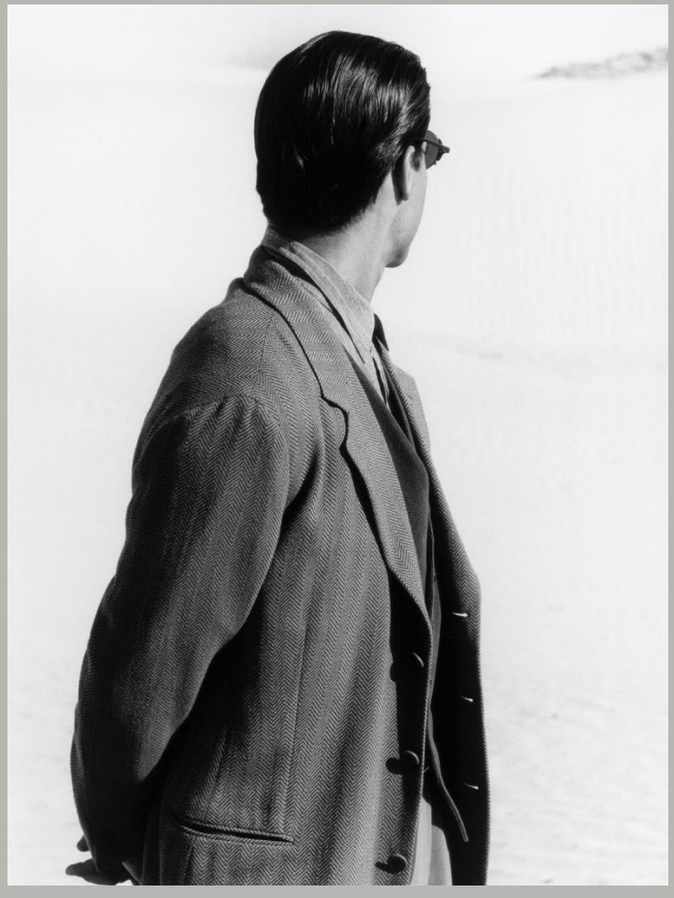
Armani Jeans
Spring/Summer 1985



Giorgio Armani Underwear
Spring/Summer 1987

Emporio Armani
Spring/Summer 1990

Giorgio Armani
Spring/Summer 1990

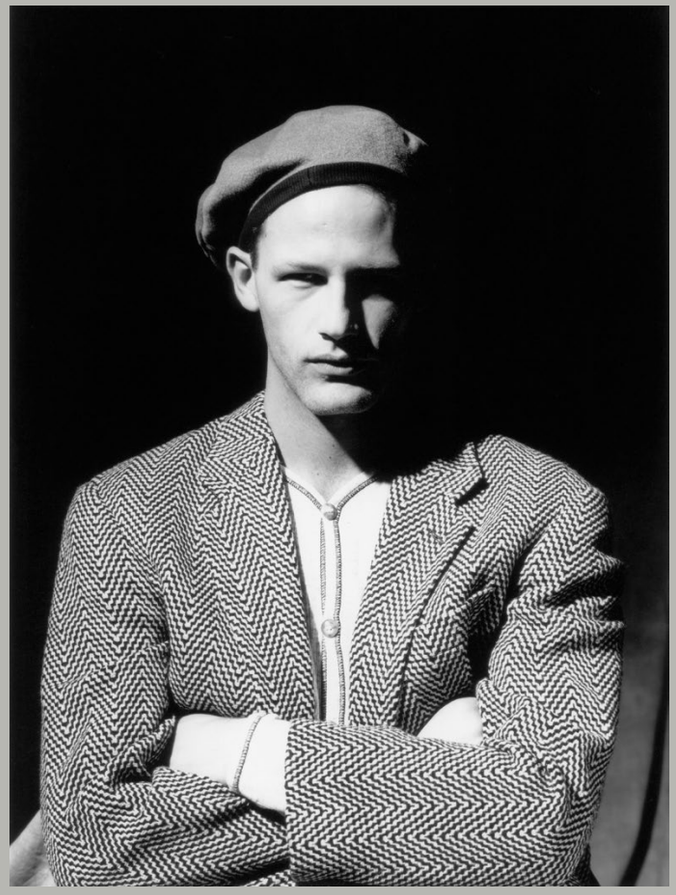


Giorgio Armani
Spring/Summer 1990

Emporio Armani
Autumn/Winter 1990

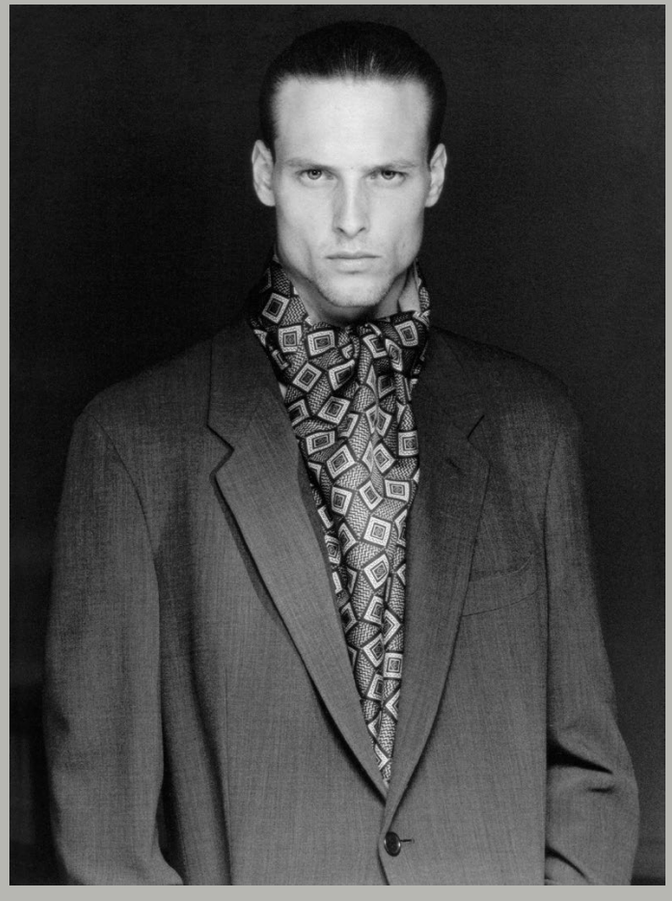
Giorgio Armani
Spring/Summer 1991

Giorgio Armani
Spring/Summer 1992



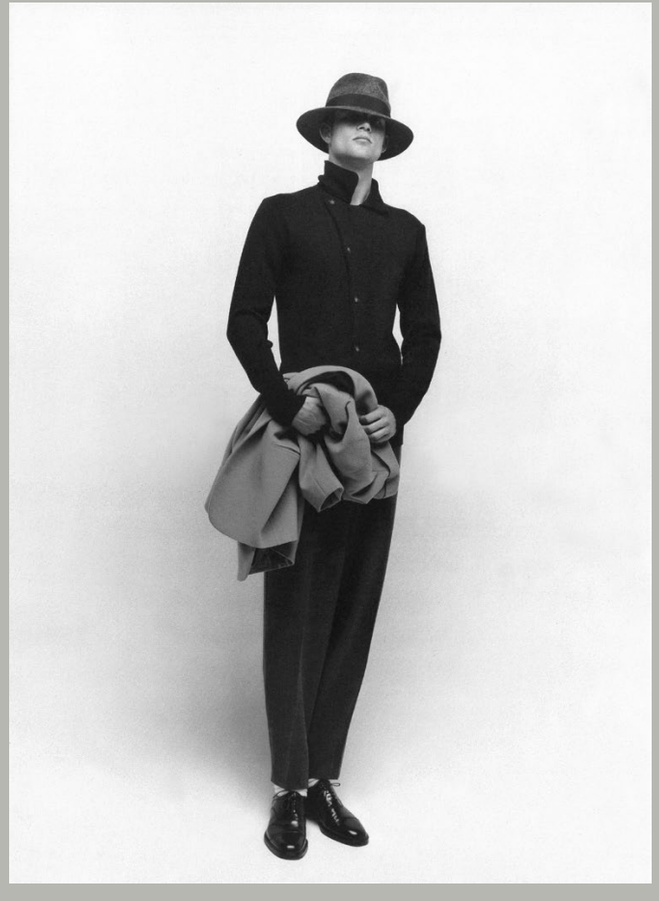
Emporio Armani
Autumn/Winter 1992

Giorgio Armani
Autumn/Winter 1992



Giorgio Armani
Autumn/Winter 1992

Giorgio Armani
Autumn/Winter 1992



Emporio Armani magazine
Autumn/Winter 1992

Emporio Armani magazine
Spring/Summer 1993

Before having my own label, I used to collaborate with different brands. Some of them were based near Florence where Aldo Fallai had his graphic design and photography studio. The decision to get in touch with him – as well as with other guys from Tuscany – was spontaneous but also quite natural. Everything was new to us, and none of the things we had seen before seemed to be able to express the way we were feeling. We tried to develop our ideas by working side by side, having long conversations, meetings and rehearsals. It wasn't easy either.

The menswear imagery was a deep reflection on life, experiences and personal memories which could tell the story of everything I believed. The models had to be natural, neat, expressive. I wanted faces that could suggest the ability to think and that demonstrated fullness of character.

For many years, garments had been made with stiff fabrics that rigidly boxed up the body. I preferred naturalness, nonchalance, small flaws, and that's why I chose soft fabrics and materials which were able to caress the body as it was never done before during the Industrial Revolution. It was a new sensibility that went beyond the stereotype of muscle men because it revealed a sense of rigour and precision that didn't affect men's sensuality. Together with Aldo Fallai, we were able to realise this ideal in our campaigns.

Giorgio Armani, April 2014

In Milan in the early-1970s, a young graphic designer called Aldo Fallai met an equally young fashion designer called Giorgio Armani. They both shared dreams of creating a new and fiercely precise menswear aesthetic, one that would combine stylistic perfection with sculptural poses and brooding sensuality. It took Fallai to pick up a camera in order to adopt the role of Armani's visual interpreter; and in doing so he was able to transform their utopian Armani man into a visual reality.

In the ensuing years, this reality was never better expressed than when Fallai's bold photographs were blown up onto vast billboards. In 1984, one such huge mural, located on Milan's Via Broletto, was prompting Italian men – and therefore all men – to reconsider what they thought about fashion, about their style, about their lives. Depicting four immaculately dressed men – real men, not simply beautiful models – their identical suits and ties the proof that the bedraggled 1970s had been replaced by a new era of mature mass democracy.

While fashion (including that of Armani) may have since moved on, the aesthetic codes as defined in Fallai's imagery remain as relevant today as they ever have. Indeed, a cursory glance at any men's fashion magazine or seasonal menswear campaign will highlight the extent to which contemporary imagery is informed by Fallai's sense of poise, composition and precision.

Talking to Aldo Fallai is a challenge. He's not one to naturally want to theorise over the work he created with Armani. Even during the recent press conference for his retrospective book, *Aldo Fallai: From Giorgio Armani to Renaissance: Photos 1975-2013*, he remained shy and almost reticent to comment. We asked his friend, the veteran Italian fashion journalist Giusi Ferrè, to help him recall the period when he and Armani defined the codes that would change men's fashion forever.

When did your working relationship with Giorgio Armani begin?
It was around 1972 or 1973. Giorgio was still a young designer at the time; he didn't have his own label yet. He was designing for a number of different houses, among them one from Florence which, if I remember correctly, was called Tendresse. I hadn't even picked up a camera yet. I was a graphic designer for them, designing things like T-shirts and logos.

'The first time I met Giorgio, I thought he was quite funny. Everyone thought he came across as a pretty serious person but he knows when to laugh.'

Weren't you still involved in teaching at that time too?
Yes, I used to teach at the Istituto Statale d'Arte where I also studied. But I didn't want to continue teaching because the world was changing so much. I didn't know what to say to the students – they were all unemployed and not much younger than myself. I taught for five years then I quit.

You mentioned before that you hadn't picked up a camera. Can you explain how that moment came about?
Sometime in the mid-1970s, Giorgio had been offered six pages of coverage in *Vogue*. I suggested that I shoot the story for him and he accepted. I bought a camera and started to learn about model agencies – two things that were totally new to me at the time.

What led you to the idea that photography was the ideal medium to explore?
I used to paint, I was a graphic designer and I used to take photographs for myself. I offered the creative knowledge I had to the designers I was working with to present their designs in the best way. In this instance with Giorgio, photography was the relevant solution.

What do you remember about the clothes Giorgio was designing then?
I was extremely fascinated by Giorgio's designs, by his deconstructed jackets. But also, do you remember he designed military uniforms? It was such an exciting moment. I mean, who would ever think about dressing the army now?

Wasn't that the spectacular shoot in Caserma Perrucchetti? I still remember looking at those photographs for the first time back in the late 1970s.
That's right.

So, you started with Giorgio at Tendresse shooting women's apparel?
It was not directly for Giorgio, but for the label he was working for at the time.

What was your first impression of him when you met?
I just thought he was quite funny. Nobody found him funny because he comes across as a pretty serious person, but he knows when to laugh. I always got along with Giorgio: we discussed things passionately, but we never argued.

Together you developed such precise image codes, particularly for his menswear. The Armani menswear aesthetic

defined and ruled the era. Was it a clear vision from the beginning or was it something that evolved over time?
To be honest, it was unspoken; we never formulated anything specific. We developed it together step by step, as it came from simply observing what was happening around us.

For those early Armani campaigns, how closely did you and Giorgio collaborate?
It was totally collaborative. He used to be present for at least 80 per cent of the time – and I preferred to have him around. I tried to apply the working method Giorgio and I had to my work with other designers, but they didn't help me. You know, Giorgio is very restless but that's infectious. On the first day of a shoot we wouldn't just take three pictures, we'd end up taking 70!

He's still like that these days.
I remember one time we shot a full day and night without stopping. Gina Di Bernardo, the model, had 70 different types of make up done. The one that looks a bit 1930s is the same model – but she's like a young Greta Garbo. I think those pictures are among the most beautiful we ever worked on.

You say that you preferred to have Giorgio around on those shoots. What else did he bring to the process?
I can say this: Giorgio is a *perfect* stylist, he knows absolutely everything there is to know – where to put the pins, how to place the jackets in the best possible position, how to shape the waistline.

I was always particularly impressed by the image of the Armani man, because at that time he was going against the tide. In the mid-1970s there was a sort of 'low-intensity guerrilla war' taking place in Italy; groups of young people were engaged with terrorism, and that was reflected in the way they dressed. They were bohemian yet stiff, and a bit shabby. At the same time, Armani perceived a completely new type of desire. He grasped it, but he didn't fully know how to express it.
I think the key was the portraiture. All those portrait images we made look like they come from one single shoot. I recently had an exhibition, featuring all the portraits and I mixed them all up on purpose to prove this. As a body of work, the exhibition looked like the portrait of a non-existing Italian bourgeoisie – a sort of Nordic bourgeoisie, an *enlightened* bourgeoisie. Good people you could trust, who pay their taxes. A civilised population.

There definitely seems to be a strong moral element to these characters.
Actually, that was what we were all missing at the time. We were sick of Craxi-like people, of those thieves. It was a bad time, as it is now.

Something that caught my attention was how meticulous and precise the image was, yet it came across as very sensual because of the clothes. They used to show the body without undressing it. It was sexy, but pure.
You're right, and then there was also the narcissistic element of the person wearing the clothes, right? Showing off a bit. If you look closely at the images, the models are almost always looking straight at the camera – this was premeditated. Of course, there were images where they looked to the left or right but in the end we always chose the ones that looked straight at you. That's the relationship between the image on the poster and the viewer. It looks at you and centralises everything. I remember when the first Armani billboard went up. It was a small, slow, low-intensity revolution of having black-and-white fashion imagery in the streets.

What was it in particular about black-and-white imagery that you preferred?
It's like an abstraction, and it strips from the image everything that isn't completely necessary.

I think Giorgio likes that a lot too, but then people around him at the company have maybe suggested using colour.
Yes, but from a commercial point of view. I mean, especially when there's a period of general crisis, we should deliver dreams to people instead of helping to lower their general taste.

Indeed, that's one interesting aspect of Armani's aesthetics. I mean, there are two ways to present clothing. One is [Olivierio] Toscani's sort of reportage, and then there's something perhaps smore aspirational, like a dream both for men and women – I'd say that's what you and Armani developed. It's like a very subtle narrative of how we could be, and it's highly seductive.
Yes, it seemed to touch people. I remember people asking when the next billboard was coming out because they missed those big sweet faces.

'Giorgio is very restless, but that's infectious. On the first day of a shoot we wouldn't just take three pictures, we'd end up taking 70!'

How big were those first billboards?
Forty metres high! The very first ones were hand-painted because there was no inkjet at the time.

I still remember a specific campaign from 1988 featuring four men all wearing ties…
…and all wearing the same suit.

It was like a new form of democracy.
Unfortunately, over the years I threw a lot of my archives away. I did find parts of that campaign in the Armani archive, though. But not all of it.

How did you choose the models and faces of those four men?
Giorgio has always been really good at casting. I am also pretty good, but I'm not so good at picking women because I always end up getting influenced by some sort of personal fascination.

Were the men sourced from model agencies or were you street casting?
It was a mix: some regular guys and some models, but not the stereotypically beautiful models. They were all people with particular features, especially the Armani women. Antonia Dell'Atte, for example, had never modelled before: that only happened because Giorgio saw her in a restaurant. The same happened with Gina Di Bernardo. She was living in Milan, but she wasn't working at the time. Giorgio transformed her into an icon because she looked wonderful in his clothes.

There seems to be a distinct 1930s portraiture reference in your work.
Yes, that and Renaissance paintings, where the figure is the central element in the layout. You cannot cut or crop it anywhere – it's just as it is. The 1930s were also remarkable years in terms of fashion and photography.

The 1930s are obviously a sensitive subject for Italians. People were outraged when the mayor of Milan planned to organise a retrospective 1930s exhibition. It was perceived as the revival of fascism, though that obviously wasn't the purpose.
Architects knew how to hide that though. Florence train station, which was designed by Giovanni Michelucci, is beautiful. Only if you look at it from a plane can you see that there's a concealed reference to fascism – it hints at the fasces. It's smart because Michelucci was not a fascist! He was obviously working within restrictions, but what he did with them was genius.

I do remember some beautiful architectural photographs you shot for an Emporio Armani campaign.
Do you mean the statues?

Yes, the statues. Were they inspired by the Foro Italico?
Yes. When we were working on that campaign, an issue of Franco Maria Ricci's *FMR* art magazine came out and it was about those statues. Our main references were the Foro Italico and the Olympic Stadium [Stadio dei Marmi] where the statues were amazing.

Wasn't this the campaign where the guy has blond hair?
Yes, and those images are retouched by hand with a paintbrush.

He looks so much like a statue, that's amazing. It is still impressive after 30 years. I know that a lot of photographers use it as a reference for sports imagery. A lot of people go back to those photographs because there was something very heroic about those men. They were the perfect fit for Emporio, which was the line Armani had designed for a younger customer.
At that time many designers used to make collections inspired by the latest successful movie.

Yes, I remember when *Out of Africa* came out: that's when I realised the influence of cinema on fashion.
Although we used *FMR* magazine as a reference, any other events around that time could have also been the source of inspiration for a collection or a campaign. Why not?

I get the impression there was less narcissism at that time with the designers. It was more common for them to be inspired by external events.
Yes, at the end of the day they are just designers!

So let's talk about your studio. Was this based in Florence at the time?
No, in Milan. I used to have a studio in Florence as well, but it was nice to have a break, go to Milan with my suitcase, work and then leave. I also used to work on *Emporio Armani* magazine with Rosanna [Armani, Giorgio's sister]. She also modelled for me and Giorgio.

'I remember when the first Armani billboards went up. It was the start of a slow revolution of black-and-white fashion imagery in the streets.'

She was so pretty. Was she good at giving directions on his behalf?
It's not a coincidence that they are siblings! She is tough and very demanding. I do miss that, actually.

Do you know what? It's sometimes complicated to work for Armani but also easy once you grasp his aesthetics and his concept.
Right, but I can tell that not everybody has managed to grasp that!

Did you approach your work for Giorgio Armani and Emporio Armani differently?
To be honest, it didn't really make any difference to me. I guess you could say that one type was more the one you meet on the street and the other the one you would like to stop on the street!

If I think about his interior design, he likes to define the world he imagines and where he thinks you could be integrated in that world.
Yes, I think that's a key trait.

But sometimes his life must have been terrible, right? I've always thought of him as one of those people who suffers if everything is not perfectly in place.
It's funny you say that because he always allowed me to smoke. Even though he wasn't a smoker himself, he never told me to put my cigarette out. But as soon as I'd finished my cigarette, he used to personally empty the ashtray! Himself!

That's great! This is such a unique trait for people to understand. Armani is one of the few designers who invented and created this precise style.

'With Armani, it was the first time fashion was about a precise style of dressing, of living in a specific house, of going to a particular hotel.'

I remember the controversy when they decided to call it Emporio. Everybody was against it as the word had connotations of something mass market! Anyway, Armani always took such extreme care about his campaigns because the aim of those images was to represent his entire brand concept. It was never simply a matter of presenting a dress or a suit; it was about communicating who is the man wearing that suit and what is his entire world and environment. I believe that's a different aesthetic model.
Along with the campaign, there was always a book, which people liked. At that time the brand communication encompassed an entire way of living.

This has always been one of Armani's trademarks and it's still recognisable.
Yes, it was a precise style of dressing, of living in a specific house, of going to a particular hotel.

You worked with many other clients. Did you feel the difference?
I collaborated with pretty much everybody: I did some work for Valentino which remains anonymous, two or three campaigns for Calvin Klein… I had a lot of clients, except for Versace and Dolce & Gabbana as that would have been a conflict. And yes, I noticed the difference. I genuinely loved the style of Armani and I personally dressed that way. Before meeting him, I used to wear second-hand clothes that I'd bought from the local market.

We talked before about the strong moral element that the Armani man embodied. Those faces and those looks also represent a real sense of health.
Yes and nowadays young people in their twenties don't know that kind of look. When I was in Florence for my exhibition, I saw students drawing the jackets. Can you believe that? The guys wear such tiny jackets now!

They look like kids' jackets, right?
I've noticed men in London and Paris wearing black leggings or tights.

Armani was the designer who launched large trousers. Do you think there's an element of him referring to the memory of his father?
I always thought about that.

In his womenswear, there are references to his mother, her spirit is in there.
Yes, I agree. I used to know his mother pretty well.

She was a wonderful woman.
She was great! His father was a very elegant man. He always wore a gilet and I've seen pictures of him wearing a creased white suit.

Giorgio once told me his big regret was that hadn't known his father well.
Yes, because he died when he was young. But there are many pictures of him around.

He said that he never paid that much attention to his father and that he later understood that he'd ignored so many details about the man. He remembers him fixing and cleaning his watch, as his father loved vintage watches.

I think this is a beautiful memory, and I've always thought that in his menswear there's a bit of his father.
Yes, there's a certain softness in the image of a linen suit with the gilet.

Another thing I was curious about is the incredible success of *American Gigolo*, which helped launch the Armani man worldwide.
Yes, that was the trigger for Armani's international expansion in the 1980s. A movie like that was the perfect platform, and Richard Gere looked a bit like one of the Armani models.

The way he walked was very Armani. Richard Gere has always said that he owes the launch of his career to Armani. There was something in the *American Gigolo* masculine image that was interesting, and it was the perfect introduction of Armani's jacket, his trousers, his shirt.
It was a very neat and precise look. I remember being really impressed by that image at the time. Although to be honest, when I look at it now, it seems rather flat and a bit too American.

Can you remember any other cinematic influences you recognise or consciously referenced?
If you watch Fellini's *I Vitelloni*, you can see where the Armani style comes from. He was probably still in his teens when that film came out.

It's interesting you say that because that style has always had a huge impact on him.
Giorgio developed the men's waistline, which is something nobody was doing before. The waistline became wider by going higher. He revisited – and made fashionable again – the shape designed by Yves Saint Laurent.

Your collaboration with Armani lasted many years, until the mid-1990s, right?
Even after that. I also shot some collections a few years ago. We'll maybe do something else together in the future.

Do you often stop to think about the work you created together? And the aesthetic you developed?
No. Fellini used to say that films should never be explained. I am sure that if Giorgio and I were to discuss this now, we'd agree on the past. At the end of the day, we both knew we were making a bit of history.

Finally, there are many great photographers nowadays, but when you look at the campaigns they shoot you rarely think, for example, 'Ah! That's a Calvin Klein campaign!' You always end up thinking, 'Ah! That's Peter Lindbergh'. When you look at an Armani campaign, though, it *is* Armani, and it comes from this collaborative process that dates back to those first shoots. This is what makes the difference.
In my opinion, fashion advertising campaigns will never have their place in what I consider to be fine-art photography, a medium that is based on the notion of exhibiting photographs. This is the world of someone like Cartier-Bresson for example. Nonetheless, photography can be highly effective and emotive when used in collaboration with other environments and mediums. And this can sometimes be the case with photography and fashion – it is fine arts applied to industry.

‘If I don’t show up with a bag of tricks, it’s pretty much – why are you here?’

The only stylist with an army of seamstresses, Panos Yiapanis recreates his archive of unique custom-made pieces.

By Alexander Fury
Styling by Panos Yiapanis
Photographs by Matthew Stone

Hair: Syd Hayes c/o Premier Hair and Make-up for L'Oreal Paris; Make-up: Lynsey Alexander c/o Streeters for L'Oreal Paris; Models: Lindsey Wixson @ Storm Models, Bjorn Buckley @ PRM, Kesse Donkor @ Premier, Michael Morgan @ Models 1, George Elliott @ FM Models. Set Design: David White c/o Streeters; Manicurist: Shreen Gayle c/o Premier Hair and Make-up using Nails Inc; Photo Assistants: Oskar Gyllensward, Paola Vivas, Ashleigh Cunningham & Christina Photiou; Stylist Assistants: Ai Kamoshita, Isabella Kavanagh & Michelle Warner; Stylist Studio Assistants: Graciela Martin, Marian Nachmia & Tawfiq Khoury; Set Design Assistants: Max Cornwall & Danny Hyland; Chairs: The French House; Casting: Eddy Martin for File and Parade; Digital Tech: Paul Allister; Retouching: The Forge; On-set Production Coordinator: Johanna Lacey at Sylvia Farago Ltd; Production: Julia Hackel at Intrepid London.

Panos Yiapanis asks to be interviewed in the Primrose Bakery, close to London's Camden Town. Camden is somewhere I'd associate with Panos: it's sort of gritty, a bit grungy and punky – both epithets Panos applies to his work during our discussion, albeit disparagingly. It's decidedly dark, and distantly unfashion. Something everyone assumes also of Panos.

However, Primrose Bakery is neither of those things, and not very Panos to boot. There isn't a scrap of black in the place for a start, until Panos arrives with his Rottweiler, Beast – who is affectionate and sweet and not much of a beast at all despite being the size of a Shetland pony. But Primrose Bakery is close to Panos' home, and Panos hasn't been to bed. He was shooting the editorial that accompanies this interview until roughly 3am. 'Then I had to wait for all the stuff to be packed, I had to drop some stuff off… I didn't get to bed until 9:30 or something ridiculous,' he sighs. 'So that makes me a little… incoherent. My sentences are slightly nonsensical today.' Panos also likes cake. So the locale is unexpectedly perfect.

Panos Yiapanis is one of the most important stylists working in the world today. Undoubtedly. Interestingly, unlike his peers, Panos hasn't risen to the top of the game via a high-profile collaboration with a single designer, or from styling an even higher-profile pop superstar or celebrity mogul. He's done both of those things of course; his collaboration with Rick Owens stretches right back to the designer's first catwalk shows a dozen years ago. He was also one of the earliest and most significant collaborators when Riccardo Tisci joined the house of Givenchy.

But Panos' reputation has been built on editorial work, work he dubs 'indulgent', allowing him to explore notions entirely of his own imagining. These are the magazine tears that wallpaper teenage fashion fans' walls, because what Panos consistently proposes is an alternative to the anodyne fashion image. His is one of a handful of aesthetics that really matter on the international fashion scene.

More than any other stylist, Panos Yiapanis is the author of his imagery – quite literally in that many of the pieces will have been created by Panos' own studio, a buzzing hive of activity that churns out everything from studded leggings to bejewelled high heels. I myself have always wondered if there's a frustrated fashion designer inside Panos, aching to get out. Although after a decade and a half in the industry, if he had wanted to pursue that path, he would have put that plan into motion. Instead, he uses it to embellish and augment designers' fashion, of any particular season, and in the process turns it into his own.

How did you select the pieces you wanted to shoot?
The initial selection was more to do with things that might still be relevant today somehow.

There are certain things that I have an attachment to, certain pieces we've made which I feel have been more successful than others. Often things get dismantled and made into other pieces. A lot of the stuff doesn't actually exist anymore. So it was also a logistical consideration, in terms of getting everything done on time.

We didn't get around to shooting everything. When I was in the cab on the way home I was remembering things that we'd made but hadn't got round to shooting – bummer!

It's interesting to think about that idea, whether or not the pieces have stood the test of time.
Not a lot of them have, it's kind of strange. Obviously when I first started, I did a lot of things that would be considered 'punky' or 'grungy', all of that. A lot of denim, that now would look… not irrelevant, but slightly dated.

I wonder if that is just you relating them very strongly to an older shoot – this is so 2003, I can't possibly use this.
At one point, we were making a lot of over-embroidered print pieces. And now I can't think of anything worse. We covered a bit of it in this shoot, and it works as an image because the print and the embroidery oversaturate the image, but as a garment in itself, they become a little banal.

The funny thing is, the stuff is never made to have a life…

It's not made with the intention of surviving after the shoot?
It's purely a visual aid. Sometimes, we make something that ends up resembling an outfit, for the fun of it. But that's never the intention when we start out on a shoot. That's why it's never transpired into anything other than those items made specifically for shoots, as opposed to anything with the intention of being a real garment.

They are satisfying a visual need?
They're kind of a crutch. A very easy way to make a picture identify itself with me. It's also become a little bit of a formula. If I don't do it, people feel like I've not really made an effort. If I don't show up with a little bag of tricks, it's almost – well, why are you here then?

But it's fine. Like I've said in the past, I can't do… the *other* type of styling, let's just put it that way. It helps. It kind of gives it an identity, some kind of visual importance.

I like busy pictures, I like it when you have to squint to see what's there. It's also a way of avoiding that situation where everybody is shooting the same garment. Some people find amazing ways of using the garment as it is and making it their own. I can't. So this is the way that I found.

Is there a sort of frustration with what's on in fashion at the moment?
[*Immediate, violent shaking of the head*] No. Not at all. It wasn't born out of the idea, 'Oh, I don't like what's out there…'

If anything, I do think it's an interesting time right now… well, it is at times… sometimes.

So it's not born out of that need. I think that would be slightly – not arrogant – but to think that I could do something in a little poxy studio with a few people that would be better than…

And they always tend to be pieces that lend themselves to extremities of the body. Around the leg, or feet or head. It's not a garment really, it's more… I like filling the whole body. There's always leggings, more leggings, headpieces and masks, it's become a little bit of a stereotype.

There's some bare skin, or a bit of the body that could be covered with something in order to make the picture more exciting?
Yes. At times I think it kind of denotes a weakness. It denotes a slight insecurity. Sometimes, I hold back. But especially for editorial, there's more than a slight self-centred approach to it too.

It does have an element of indulgence. I do get pleasure out of it. So much of what I do with photographers is dependant on the photographers. There's an element of being edited in the job that we do; if you work with a designer, too, you're adapting to that designer.

It's one way of being able to sneak myself into the picture more than I would be able to otherwise.

I wonder then, do you have a very set idea when you're making the pieces? Is it something you discuss with the photographer beforehand?
No. It's more private. If it's something very specific, then yes. But more often than not, we're making a whole load of things. Some pieces are successful, others aren't.

For example one shoot I did with Willy [Vanderperre], I did a collaboration with this Ukranian guy, Ben Hassett, who made these steampunk masks. When it's something as specific as that…

But surely the photographer has to have at least a basic knowledge of what you're going to bring with you on the day of the shoot!
Yes. But I'm never sure until the day how it's going to pan out.

Do you ever find that you make something and then during the course of the shoot you end up adapting it into something entirely new?
Not really. That happens afterwards. Usually, they're either successful or not. They don't morph into other things by chance.

Do you go through stages of certain techniques and aesthetics that you like? Because other people end up working within fashion's prescribed trends – everyone's collections look 1960s, so it's going to look 1960s – but yours gives you freedom.
I never know what 1960s looks like! I always seem to get it wrong! I don't have a lot of fashion reference points. But I do go back to previous shoots and readdress the things that weren't successful and try to make them work. There's a definite arc.

There are always two outfits that are pretty much resolved in my head from the get-go. And they inform the other ones. Usually, they're the first two that we make and photograph, then it's a case of chasing afterwards, and trying to make the others as good. I sometimes end up using the best pieces in two or three pictures, and then wishing I had more. Often, we've worked on something for two months, or a month. And then the photographer crops it…

'So much of what I do is dependent on the photographers. It's one way of being able to sneak myself into the picture.'

'I can't do the *other* type of styling. Some people find amazing ways of using the garment as it is, and make it their own. I can't. So this is the way I found.'

I guess there's an amount of… well, I don't want to say pride, but when you've worked so hard on something, you want people to see it?
I think with the nature of the business there are not a lot of things we can have ownership of. I've being doing this for 15 years; there's something very temporal, I don't own any of the pictures, I don't own anything I've consulted on with any designer. It's such a collaborative process, but at the same time…

It's a collaboration with someone else's name on the label, or with someone else's name on the photograph.
Exactly. And that also used to happen quite a lot with pieces we used to make. We'd make pieces for the brands we'd work with. And I later decided against that, just because I think it didn't work out. Things didn't translate. The impact they had in the picture was lost on the runway. It cheapened it. It not only cheapened the actual pieces, it cheapened the pictures. It was a step too self-indulgent.

Because there's always been *that* question. From early on in my career, there's been this lingering recurring question of why we don't produce these pieces… it's always been something that I've resisted. I never wanted to open it to that critique. There's something about the fact that they're just for a picture – there's no ulterior motive, I don't see myself as a designer. Because things are made for shoots, they're not thought of as a garment. And somewhere along the line it just stumbles and falls. It's strange, that translation has never worked.

It's interesting that that isn't something you're chasing.
I'm running away from it! It's always that thing, even on set. If it's a model I haven't worked with before, they say, 'Oh, why don't you design?'

Don't get me wrong, I really enjoy working with designers. I only work on a brand if I can consult, I won't just go in and style it two weeks before. I'm not good at that. I enjoy that process, but when I've cross-pollinated it with stuff that we've made, it hasn't worked out.

When did you first start to create pieces for shoots?
Right from the beginning. The first shoot I only made a tulle top or something. It was basic. It all came from Corinne [Day]: she would show me this cobweb top that her and Melanie [Ward] had made out of a T-shirt. And Melanie colouring in cowboy boots, all of that. So I thought that's what you do. And then obviously as time went by, things got a little more complicated. And sometimes too conceptual at times… slightly pretentious.

For you, is it natural to make something rather than search for it?
I don't go out hunting for things anymore. Ai, who works with me, is really good at researching – she found this tranny performer in New York who makes the most insane shoes.

We always get an exclusive on pieces, so they're not allowed to be shot again. But afterwards, they always end up on other shoots… and immediately they lose that intimacy and exclusivity. They make them a little more pedestrian, especially when you see them in a horrible context. With our pieces, I like that you'll never see these things outside of how I want you to see them. They have – I don't want to say purity, that sounds very pretentious – but they're kind of mine. Ideally, if we can make it in the time that we have, we'll make it.

Sometimes it's a collaboration. So slowly, slowly you build a team. You know he's great with metalwork, or she's great with fur or embroidery.

Are there lots of people? Or is there a core?
There's one head of studio, then a lot of interns. About 25 people.

I suppose, the idea is that you can react to a shoot, change things.
But it's that law: however well-prepared you are, however in advance you work, that just gives you more time to think about things towards the end. It's always a mad dash before the end. But on a shoot you can get away with…

…having it glued together
Yes. Quite often, especially with embroidery, we try to be meticulous. There's a real anal thing about that.

But while they may be beautifully done here [*he gestures along his torso*], from the back… I mean on this shoot, at one point Lindsey's [Wixson] posterior…

…was totally naked?
Yes!

Was it odd to see all those pieces in a new and different context? Outside of how they were originally conceived?
Often, it happens that I bring things back and slightly change them. There are quite a few things in there that have been shot two times, by two different photographers.

It is extraordinary, looking at some of those pictures, to realise how influential the pieces have been. How copied.
I mean, however derogatory I'm being about them… I remember a treatment we did on denim and then [a rather famous designer] did a collection based around them.

Is that gratifying?
It depends.

If they do it well, I guess?
Sometimes, but not when it's completely lifted – especially, if it's another stylist. I purposefully, on this shoot, didn't want it to become that though.

I know you have an archive of designer clothes… do you archive your *own* pieces from shoots?
No, no, no. Maybe a few things, but no. They're the bastard kids that go out and do the dirty work. Not a lot survives. A lot of stuff gets chopped up, even on set. We end up with scraggly bits of fabric – which is a little bit of a shame.

I wonder if there's something seductive in that temporality? You can have these for just one day then they become something else.
Well, we always tidy up, and almost everything gets thrown out – and the next shoot, somehow, everything I've discarded, I need. But storing all that would be a logistical nightmare. Honestly, either the next shoot or the one after, everything we throw away is what we need to go out and find or remake.

There's no beauty to them, apart from the picture. And they're not that spectacular. They work in that context. That's why I felt really unsure of this whole project, because they're there as enhancement. They're not there to be the star of the show. And all of a sudden they're put in that context and put under that scrutiny. And I don't know if they live up to that.

But I've said yes. So I'm just going to do it. If it's the wrong decision, it's the wrong decision. Boo hoo.

'There's this recurring question about why we don't produce these pieces. It's something I've always resisted. I never want to open it to that critique.'

The blond questionnaire: Donatella Versace

By Loïc Prigent

How big is your closet?
As big as the house of Versace. I only wear, and have only ever worn, Versace. At work, I wear pretty much the same kind of things: black jeans, black top, black leather dress.

How extreme are you?
Very. I want everything to be the most it can be. The loudest music, the biggest diamond, the most exquisite craftsmanship, the most luxurious materials.

What do you binge on?
Fashion. Some designers complain about how many collections they have to create each year. For me, I can't get enough. I get impatient for next season as soon as a show is over.

What's your guiltiest pleasure?
Is gossiping a guilty pleasure?

What did you learn from Madonna?
Discipline.

What did you teach Madonna?
What life is like with long blond extensions.

What is the right height for a high heel?
The right height is super, super high. I don't understand any other height. I have never worn a kitten heel. But I love it when I see a young woman wearing a Versus Versace print dress, a leather jacket and a pair of biker boots.

How can someone impress you at a job interview?
Be quick-witted, be original, be authentic, be curious, be enthusiastic, be strong. And don't presume that I want to hear flattery.

What are the qualities of the best personal assistant?
The ability to know what I want before I want it.

What makes a good bodyguard?
The way he looks. If I am to have a guard with me at all hours, I want someone who is good looking.

What makes a good body?
Health of mind and body.

What is your greatest superstition?
I'm not superstitious. Life is too short.

Have you got a secret Instagram account you're not telling us about?
I have no secrets, and if I did I wouldn't share them with you! The official Versace account is mine!

What did you learn from Lady Gaga?
A new contemporary language.

What did you teach Lady Gaga?
To be blond inside.

How was it to work with Richard Avedon?
One of the most amazing experiences of my career. Those shoots were incredible moments of pure creativity. Avedon's genius was to take the power of Versace and the beauty of the models, to create some of the most iconic fashion imagery of all time. It was an honour to be there, by his side, on every shoot. It was an experience I shall never forget.

What was the best party you ever attended?
All of Versace's after-show parties.

Who is your favourite DJ of all time?
The most surprising DJs are the ones who aren't normally DJs.

When is the last time you had a sleepless night?
Every night before each show! But if a designer gets any sleep before their show, they should be worried. If you don't have a sleepless night, you're not working hard enough.

Photograph: Courtesy of Versace

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